

Public Children Library-An Interactive Social Community

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigated the interactive relationship among three types of people (children, caregivers, and librarians) in a public children library at Pittsford of Rochester via qualitative research method. The social learning theory and community of practices are adopted as theoretical lenses to help analyze and understand the observed phenomenon in the research site. The findings showed in two categories: interactive people and interactive site. Interactions among interactive persons were varied in types and interactive site presented a dynamic way.

Keywords: *qualitative study, public children library, interaction, children, caregivers, librarians*

1. INTRODUCTION

This research study aims to complete a qualitative method study in a field to meet a required assignment in a qualitative research method course in Warner School of University of Rochester in US. The choice of the public children library at Pittsford of Rochester in New York State of America in that the researcher's curiosity about what activities are implemented on this site between the adults and children. The focuses of the project were identified by the phenomenon-interactions between the adults and children, including how they interact with each other, how they felt about the interactions, and etc. Then following research questions were formed: how do caregivers (including grandparents, parents, and nanny) and librarians interact with children in the public library?

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This paper uses the social learning theory and community of practices as theoretical lenses to help analyze and understand the phenomenon under study.

Social Learning Theory. The key tenets of social learning theory were like this: learning was an active cognitive process interacting with the social environment and one's own behaviors with or without changeable behaviors, including observing, acquiring information from observation, or making decisions and forming behaviors according to the observations of others' behaviors and reinforcement was not necessarily for learning [1]. According to the social learning theory [1], children learn from practical experiences and form their diverse actions by times and environments, such as controlling emotions, settling debates, contacting with other people, imitating and reinforcing [2] [3] [4]. In this

sense, through exposure to the children public library frequently, or during their whole growing times of childhood, children accumulate practical experiences in this social environment, and learn from others, including caregivers, librarians, and other children.

Besides, social learning theory is also concerned with the interactions among family members by differential reinforcement (a designed skill to award children's beneficial actions and minimize their improper ones), not attributing the issues to each part of either children or parents [5].

Community of Practice. Community of practices appears in the collaborate learning had distinctive characteristics, including shared interests, common participation in activities and discussions, benefited to each other by actions and information, practicing and developing experiences and approaches with each other to encounter issues together and participants were the core role in the social community [6] [7] [8]. As for the public children library, the caregivers and children all belong to social participants in a common community-children library. They got together, engaging in common activities in the library, such as reading, storytelling, interacting with children, supported each other, as well as learned from each other.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Methodological Approach

In this research, I adopted the qualitative phenomenological method. Phenomenological research is referred to exploring the significance of a phenomenon of common experiences of some persons [9]. As for this project, the adults (e.g. family members and librarians) and children shared the same interactive experiences:

reading, playing and learning in the public children library. So, the phenomenological method could contribute to focus on the common experiences of varied participants with children, figured out the significance behind the common interactive experiences, and answered the research questions-how caregivers and librarians interact with the children in the children library.

3.2. The Site

The public library sites in the Pittsford of Rochester. The main activities for the children concluded readings, puzzles, role-play house, mirror, train table, computer, and iPads. And the primary interactions between caregivers, librarian and children happened among these activities.

3.3. Participants

There were 6 participants in this research. They were separately one grandmother, one mother with two sons, one couple made up of a father and a mother, a nanny, and one librarian in this research site.

3.4. Data Sources/Collection

This study adopted participant observation and interviews as the data collection tools. The observations of the field and making the field notes set a good foundation for understanding the fundamental services and activities in the children library. The field notes contributed to realize what kinds of facilities were provided and used, how many main activities happened on the site, the types of people who had contacts with children. Then 6 distinctive interviews were conducted in total all of which were made into interview transcripts for data analysis.

3.5. Data Analysis

In this research, the initial open coding in the pre-coding was conducted to have a general comprehension of the holistic research site, activities, and participants, then descriptive coding in the first cycle coding to grasp the basic ideas of the main interactive activities and the settings and lay a foundation for the further cycle of coding and processing coding in the second cycle coding contributing to focus on the repetitive actions and interactions happened among caregivers and librarians with children.

4. FINDINGS

4.1. Findings

Based on the coding and analysis of the data, the findings in this research presented that varied styles of interactive people were through the process of interaction between caregivers, librarians, and children (see the figure1).

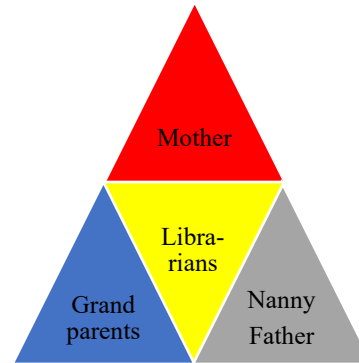


Figure 1 Varied types of caregivers

Mothers appeared most frequently in the children library, and they did the most active interactions with children in the library: taking care of the children, selecting reading materials and stories for children, meanwhile teaching the children knowledge, e.g. “The boy asked the name of the truck; the mom responded and explained the differences of wheels among the trucks.” (FN-2). The librarian had their most interactive times with children in storytelling time on weekends: they told simple picture books and songs for toddlers while longer story books for 4-6 aged children, as the librarian remarked about the storytelling, “I read it is a good way enrich your child vocabulary” (I-librarian). They served for searching books, etc., because they enjoyed and preferred to offer the best services or guides for the family members and children. Grandparents were full of passions to take care with children but they “don’t have energy that twenty-seven years old they have, but they try too” (I-librarian). Some fathers preferred checking out books with children directly, some father would be with the mother together watching the children for the good reasons given by the father, “a healthy marriage is most helpful for parents keeps them much, work together, and get together to learn a lot from that” (I-couple), while some fathers just let the children play by themselves, “reading a book alone and having no communication with the boy” (FN-4). Some nanny was clear of the duty to watch the children, reading for children, as the nanny said, “I feel so cool, they feel good too, we play the game, story, and imagine how the story happen” (I-nanny), while some nanny was out of responsibilities: “some of them were there with her friends, no watching the kids” (I-librarian). Although the styles of interactive people were distinctive, according to community of practices, different roles (grandparents, mothers, fathers, nannies, and librarians) shared their common interests and engagements with children in the

library, sometimes they chatted with each other to share information, sometimes they just could observe each other to learn what others did. Participating, practicing, and developing their experiences were the key characteristics in this collaborate community-public children library (see the figure 2).

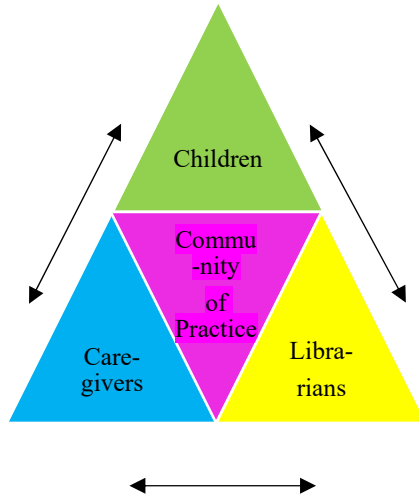


Figure 2 Collaborate community-public children library

5. CONCLUSION

This qualitative research study presented that the public children library was a practical community with a social learning process. The meanings of these findings are significant: the varied interactions styles of people with children enlightened the caregivers and librarians to clearly recognize their interactive experiences with the children and implied for them how to improve their future interactive activities with the children and contribute to the growth of the children and their common experiences.

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