

## **Introduction to Qualitative Analysis**

### **Thesis and Dissertation Conference**

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### **Key Points in Developing a Focus Group**

1. Knowing your goal is crucial
  - a. Topic guide vs. Interview guide
  - b. Most of your projects will be driven by interview guides
  - c. Answer a specific question not necessarily exploring a general topic
2. Typical group size is six to ten
  - a. Enough to stimulate discussion without competing for time
  - b. The smaller the number the more in-depth understanding of the participants perspective
3. Consider randomly selecting participants to eliminate bias (if applicable)
  - a. Large group of a specific population
  - b. Nth place sampling easiest
4. Most focus groups use purposive sampling based on the goals of the group
5. Typical number of groups is three to five
  - a. Assumes groups are moderately complex and moderately diverse
  - b. Diminishing return from each additional group (Theoretical Saturation)
6. Meeting should take place in public location
7. Prepare for 1 to 2 hour focus groups
8. Ask usually between 5 and 7 questions

## Developing Focus Group Questions

### 1. Guiding Principles for Asking Focus Group Questions

- Conversational
  - Wording of the questions should be direct, forthright, comfortable, and simple
  - Exp. What would it take for this program to get an A?
- Be Clear
  - Short, one dimensional, jargon-free ( No ACRONYMS)
  - Bad Exp. What way was the program **useful** and **practical**? (Multi-dimensional)
- Seek Help
  - Test questions with people similar to your target audience

### 2. Phrasing Focus Group Questions

- Use open ended questions
  - What did you think of the program?
  - What do you like best about the proposed program?
- Ask Participants to think back
  - “Think back” establishes a context for the response
  - Its good to shift participants from the “here and now” occasionally
  - Think back to the last time you registered for a course at the university. How were you treated?
- Keep questions simple
  - What are the ingredients that are associated with a healthy lifestyle? Or Describe a healthy lifestyle.
- BE cautious about giving examples
  - Gives clues to the type of response you want
  - Krueger (1998) “Mental Ruts”
  - Limits the thinking of the participants
- Probing question
  - Would you explain further? Can you give me an example? I don’t understand.
  - Not every thing is worthy of a probe
  - Probe early to set the stage
  - Probe sparingly and consider the usefulness of the information

- Follow-up questions
  - Question link to the proceeding question by logic or reason
  - Generally if/then relationships
  - Exp. What is the major problem in our community? (Then) What are the causes? (And) What should we do about it?
- Unplanned and serendipitous questions
  - Use with caution. Unplanned questions can change the course of the discussion.
  - Best to save those questions for the end

### **3. Categories of Questions**

- Opening – Participants get acquainted and feel connected
- Introductory – Begins discussion topic
- Transition – Moves smoothly and seamlessly to key questions
- Key – Obtains insight on areas of central concern for the study
- Ending – Helps investigators determine where to place emphasis and bring closure to the discussion

### **4. Sequencing Focus Group Questions**

- Provide background information
- General questions before specifics
- Positive questions before negative questions
- Consistency is important
- Usually questions are not changed

Krueger, R. A. (1998). Developing Questions for Focus Groups: Focus Group Kit 3. In Morgan, A. L. & Krueger, R. A. (Eds.). *The Focus Group Kit*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications.