

Introduction to Focus Groups

Gavin Henning
Student Affairs Planning, Evaluation and Research
Dartmouth College
gavin.henning@dartmouth.edu

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Source

- Krueger, R. A. (2006). *Focus group interviewing*.

Session Outcomes

- Articulate the characteristics of a focus group
- Articulate the skills needed to moderate and record a focus group
- Ask useful focus group questions
- Take useful notes
- Analyze data collected from a focus group

Assessment Topic

- Think about an assessment topic or question that a focus group may be appropriate for.

Characteristics

- Participants
 - Carefully selected
 - 5-10 people
 - 6-8 preferred

Characteristics

- Time
 - 1.5 - 2 hours
 - Need enough time to establish rapport

Characteristics

- Environment
 - Comfortable and open
 - Circular seating
 - Recorded
 - Notes
 - Tape

Characteristics

- Moderator
 - Skillful in group facilitation
 - Uses pre-determined focused questions
 - Establishes permissive environment and rapport with participants

Characteristics

- Recorder
 - Handles logistics
 - Takes notes

Characteristics

- Analysis and Reporting
 - Systematic analysis
 - Verifiable procedures
 - Appropriate reporting

Moderator Responsibilities

- Be mentally prepared
- Use purposeful small talk
- Make smooth and snappy introduction
- Use pauses and probes
- Control reactions to participants

Moderator Responsibilities

- Use subtle group control
- Use appropriate conclusion
- Debrief with recorder
- Perform analysis and write report

Recorder Responsibilities

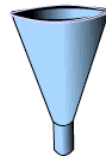
- Help with equipment and refreshments
- Arrange the room
- Welcome participants
- Sit in designated location
- Take notes

Recorder Responsibilities

- Operate recording equipment if used
- Remain quiet during discussion
- Ask questions if invited
- Give an oral summary at end
- Debrief with moderator
- Give feedback on analysis and report

Asking Questions

- Use open-ended questions
- Avoid dichotomous questions
- Use “think back” questions
- Use questions that get participants involved
 - reflections, examples, rating scales
- Focus the questions
 - general to specific
 - funnel



Asking Questions

- Types of questions
 - Opening questions
 - Introductory questions
 - Transition questions
 - Key questions
 - Ending questions

Ending Questions

- All things considered question
 - Reflect upon entire discussion and offer opinion or main point
 - “If you had two minutes with President Wright, what would you want to tell him about today’s topic?”
- Summary question
 - After moderator offers a summary, “Is this a good summary?”
- Final question
 - “Have we missed anything?”

Strategies for Questions

- Choose among alternatives
- Make a list
- Fill in a blank
- Rate with a blank card
- Projection

Strategies for Questions

- Fantasy and daydreams
- Draw a picture
- Develop a campaign
- Role playing
- Questions that foster ownership
 - “What can you do...”

Note Taking

- Recorder’s responsibility
- Clear and consistent
- Field notes need to include a lot of information
 - Quotes
 - Key points and themes
 - Possible follow-up questions
 - Non-verbals

Practice Questions

- Let's take a few moments to practice writing questions.

Analysis Types

- Memory based
- Note based
- Tape based
- Transcript based

Systematic Analysis

- While in group
 - Draw a seating diagram and number participants
 - Confirm your notes with a summary
- Immediately after group
 - Debrief
 - Clean up notes
- Soon after the focus group - a day or two
 - Transcribe tapes
 - Prepare preliminary report
 - Triangulate report with others

Systematic Analysis

- A few days later
 - Compare and contrast multiple focus groups
 - Look for emerging themes
 - Construct typologies
 - Describe findings and include illustrative quotes

Systematic Analysis

- Finally,
 - Decide on the format of the report
 - Use quotes
 - Report question by question or theme by theme
 - Triangulate with other assessors
 - Revise and finalize the report
 - Present findings

Analysis Tips

- Word use and meaning
- Context of comments
- Internal consistency
- Frequency (comments) and extensiveness (folks)
- Intensity of verbals and non-verbals
- Specificity
- Big ideas

Focus Group Sampling

- List
- On location
- Nominations
- Snowball
- Random telephone screening
- Ads in papers and bulletin boards

Incentives

- Cash
- Food
- Gifts
- Invitation
- Opportunity to share opinions
- Involvement in an important assessment project
- Opportunity to meet new folks

Conclusion

- Final questions or comments?

Resources

- Morgan, D. L. & Krueger, R. A. (1989). *The focus group kit*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
 - Focus group guidebook
 - Planning focus groups
 - Developing questions for focus groups
 - Moderating focus groups
 - Involving community members in focus groups
 - Analyzing and reporting focus group results.
- <http://www.tc.umn.edu/~rkrueger/focus.html>
- <http://info.zoomerang.com/prodserv/onlinefocus.htm?CMP=KNC-GFocus>