FACULTY OF NURSING

Conducting Focus Groups and Interviews
WHY CONDUCT FOCUS GROUPS?

- Spoken, open-ended, broad, expressive, depth, variety, observations
- What people are really thinking and feeling
- Focus groups tell you about:
  - How people think/feel about a topic
  - Why certain opinions are held
  - Planning, design, evaluation of programs
  - Strategies for outreach
- Clear objectives
  - You should know exactly what your research questions are going into the group to keep you focused on what you want to know
- # of groups/participants
  - Recommended between 4-8 people per group
- Data/theoretical saturation
  - This depends on your population and research questions
- Time/length
  - Typical time for focus groups are 60-90 minutes
PARTICIPANTS AND INVITATIONS

- **Participants**
  - Maximizing disclosure

- **Invitations**
  - E-mail and telephone
  - Details (logistics, focus, the ‘why are we doing this?’)
  - Reminders
  - Date and start-time
  - Pre-session paperwork (e.g., consent forms)
  - Tracking sheets
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<th>Name</th>
<th>Contact Information</th>
<th>Date Contacted</th>
<th>2nd Contact Date (If no response)</th>
<th>Willing to Participate? (Y/N)</th>
<th>FG Info Given? (Y/N)</th>
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Main facilitator

- Explain purpose to make it meaningful to participants
- Knowledge of the topic – sometimes a lot of prep work
- Develop rapport/establish trust
- Can actively listen while thinking of next steps
- Sensitive/empathic/non-judgmental
  - In wording
  - In body language
- Nurtures disclosure
- Remains neutral
- Has questions memorized
You may have an assistant facilitator

- Could ask additional questions
- Monitoring audio recordings
- Note-taking
  - The actual conversation/topics
  - Speaker order
  - Non-verbal communication
- Taking field notes
SET-UP OF FOCUS GROUPS

- Audio recorders
  - If you have a back-up to use this is great just in case something goes wrong with the primary recorder
- Name tags/tents
  - This makes it much easier to keep track of people and call on people
- Seat/table placement
  - You want everyone to be able to see each other
- Snacks and refreshments
  - Good to mention there will be snacks when recruiting as well
FACILITATION

- Start-up
  - Small talk, thank yous, establish the objective, intros, ethics statement
  - Establish the ground rules

- General
  - Easy questions first
  - Pausing
  - Paraphrasing
  - Asking for additional comments
FACILITATION

- Types of questions
  - Clarifying
  - Perspective-comparing
  - Probing
  - Changing topics
  - Getting back on track
Closing the focus group
  - Next steps
  - Thank yous
  - Praise
  - Value
  - Sharing results
AFTER THE FOCUS GROUP

- Debriefing with facilitators
  - Audio recorded
  - More notes
  - Conflicting views of research team/facilitators
  - Tweaks
  - Non-verbal communication

- Summary
Creating Questions

- Semi-structured
- Natural flow/logical sequence of questions
- Conversational, familiar words, easy, clear, short, direct, one-dimensional
- Non-leading
- Important questions in the middle
- Positive questions before negative questions
- Usually around 8-10 main questions
- Open-ended – conversation stimulation
- End of the session
- Transcription
- Coding (depends on your methodology – thematic analysis, grounded theory, etc.)
- NVivo/node coding strategies
- Sharing preliminary findings with the focus group members
- Same principles, BUT:
  - Shorter
  - More questions
  - Easier to develop more rapport
  - Can be more difficult in terms of conversation