



UNIVERSITY OF
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FACULTY OF NURSING

Conducting Focus Groups and Interviews

- 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
 - 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

- 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

- 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

- 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

- 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

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

- 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