

# **Focus Group Discussions**

April 23, 2019

# Agenda

Transcription

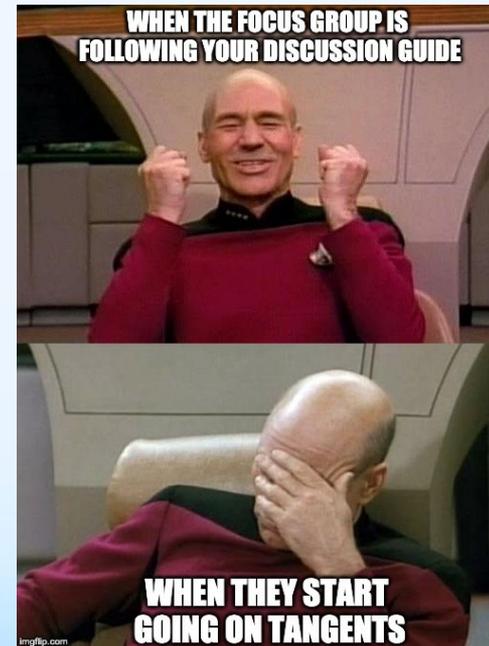
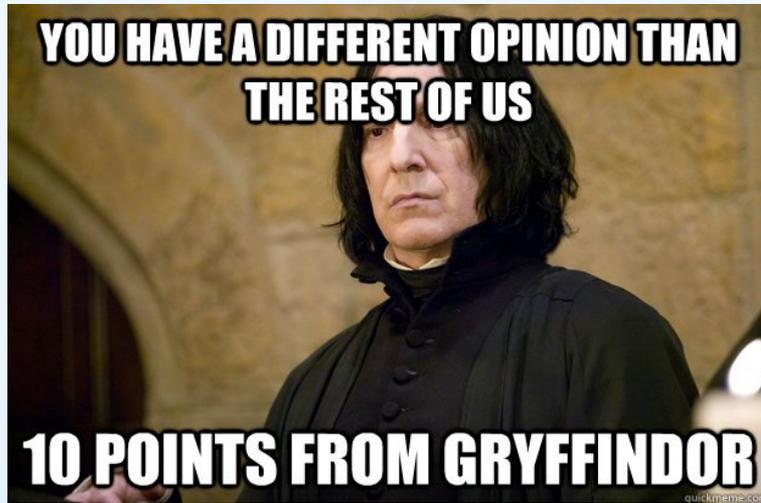
Focus Groups

Focus Group practice

# But first...

Let's talk about ethics

# Mememes



# Objectives

- Produce your own transcript, de-identified and with appropriate conventions.
- Differentiate between data collection goals for IDIs and FGDs
- Justify the use of an FGD to answer a particular research question.
- Practice facilitating FGD
- Practice taking notes during FGD

# Transcription

- Transcript, not recording or memory, is your data.
  - Augmented with expanded field notes created ASAP after FGD or IDI
- VERBATIM
  - Ums, uhs, ahs, colloquial phrases, profanity.
  - Sentence fragments and interruptions
  - **Preserve the words of the participant.**
- **Redaction** -- Remove any data that could reasonably identify the participant
  - Name
  - Identifying details
  - Not too little, not too much

The worst thing  
about censorship  
is [REDACTED].  
[REDACTED].

# Transcript Format

See Hennink p. 213

## Clear header

Unique ID (and/or pseudonym)

Date

Location

Interview length

Interviewer

Demographics (age, gender, other salient information)

## Label each participant

- I = Interviewer, P1 = Participant 1, P2 = Participant 2, etc...

## Include non-verbal data

- [Long pauses], [laughs], [sighs], [significant body language]

## ● SOME commentary as relevant

- *Participant sounded worried and kept glancing at the door. I think she was holding back because her boyfriend was nearby.*

# Transcription Logistics

- Transcription services and software exist
  - Expensive. Not helpful in other languages/heavy accents.
- Interview in another language?
  - Ideal: Transcribe -> Translate (be sure to spot check)
  - Quicker and cheaper: Transcribe while translating
- 4 hours of transcription per hour of audio
- Express scribe is helpful and free.



P: We always, like...ask from the neighbors.

I: Mm

P: And tell them that we will repay back. Like, for instance, we ask the...maybe 5kg, I mean, maybe 5 liters [?] of mealie meal. And you tell them you will repay back. Yes. Or, it can be sugar...they lend us [?] we tell them that we will repay them.

I: Do you feel shy when you are doing that?

P: Yes! I feel shy...I feel shy.

I: How do the neighbors usually react?

P: Some of them they...are always willing to help us, because they know our situation. And some of them, eh...they don't care.

I: They don't care?

P: Yes! Some of them.

I: Huh. Why is that?

P: They, they, they are helping us, but... if you can see, it is not from their bottom of their heart. They are just doing it, ah!

I: Uh huh

P: Yes.

I: They're just doing it

P: Yes. And there are those that are really willing to help us.

I: Uh huh

P: They are even opening us, that if we need some food we can go and confront them any time.

I: Those neighbors that don't care, why do you think they help if they don't care?

P: Like, you see...you see someone's emotions, you see somebody when, or...when you are in need of something. If you ask that person...yes...yet sometimes he or she will give it that thing that you are asking. But...you will see...the way she gives, or he gives, you that bad feeling.

I: Mmhmm

P: Eish, that person is not help...is not happy about helping about you.

I: Uhhmmmm besides vegetables...what other types of foods is it that people are eating?

P2: samp

I: samp?

P1 & P2: samp...

P1: that government sends to school....

P2: like in school we eat healthy food... for example samp, beans and that Friday we eat milk and phutu (pap)

P1: mhhh *agrees*

P2: and they give some fruits such as banana or orange

P1: mhh.. *agrees*

I: oh...

P1: government tries by all means to satisfy us with food that is healthy

I: mhh... *agrees*

P2: so that we can be healthy

I: why is the government doing that?

P2: because it cares a lot about us

I: mhh ... [phone rings] mhh...

P1: government wants all the people in South Africa to succeed in like....they should get everything that the need so that they are educated

FGDs

# Focus Groups Defined

- Targeted (focused) group interviews that explore knowledge, beliefs, cultural values, processes, and other important views
- Researcher/evaluator/moderator is interacting with participants
  - Empathic, open, and actively listening (Cooper 2011)
- Broad exploration and **in depth description** of views and counter views

# When to use FGDs or IDIs

## Focus Group Discussions

- To identify a range of views and experiences
- To provoke discussion and explanation of issues
- To identify new ideas and generate hypotheses
- To gather broad information about a community for less sensitive topics
- To understand group interaction and decision making

Social Norms

## In-depth Interviews

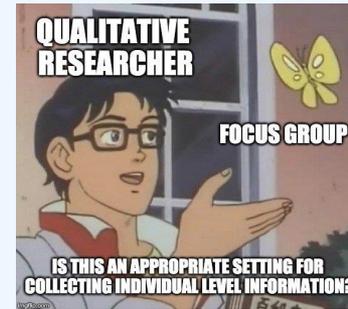
- To identify individual perceptions
- For personal experience and opinions
- For detailed, in-depth information
- For sensitive and complex topics
- For descriptive process information (i.e. life course issues, decision process, etc.)

Personal Experience

(Hennink 2007)



# IDI or FGD?



## *Topic*

- Women's contraceptive and birth histories
  - Community perceptions about an adolescent health clinic
  - Men's experience of risky sex
  - Cultural practices related to health care
  - In-depth interview
    - Individual and process information
  - Focus groups
    - Community level information
  - In-depth interviews
    - Sensitive, individual context
  - Focus groups
    - Broader cultural issues, variability
- (Hennink 2009)

# Compared to IDIs



## Strengths

- Generate data from a group of people more rapidly and for less money
- Respondents can react to and build on responses of other group members
- Known entities for non-research consumers/audiences

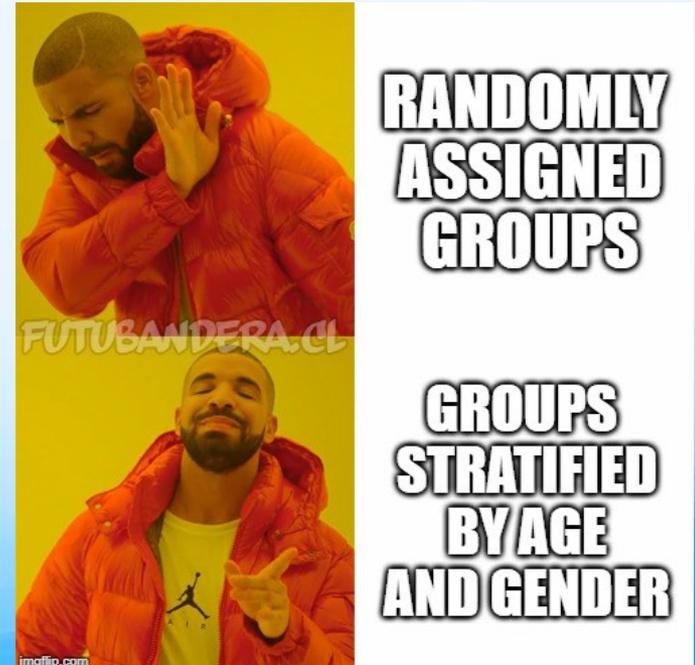
## Weaknesses

- Limited ability to capture personal and sensitive topics
- Social desirability
- Tend to capture attitudes and beliefs
- Perhaps not meanings or interpretations
- Influence of a dominant member or members
- Cannot guarantee confidentiality

# Sampling and Recruitment

# Sampling

- Number of focus groups
  - Depends on complexity of questions and segmentation of population's experiences
- Selecting Participants
  - Knowledge and expertise
  - Age, gender, status and money, etc.
  - Conflicts in the group



# Define Study Population

- Who can best inform the research question?
  - Single group or different sub-groups
  - Be specific (informs recruitment, questions, study design)  
“Adolescents” vs “15-18 year old mothers in urban areas”
- Identify any sub-groups of study population
  - Demographic, experiential, geographic considerations
  - Identify various between sub-groups
  - Comparisons for *meaning* not to measure difference

# Getting Started

- 6-8 participants is ideal
  - Recruit a few more people than you will need
- No more than two hours long
- Informed consent
  - Inform audience about presence of audio-/videotape and/or note-taker
  - Individually or in a group, depending on IRB protocol
- Incentives -- can be tailored to your participants
  - Financial
  - Reimburse for travel costs
  - Food
  - Childcare
  - Program evaluation (hold during work hours)

# Recording

- Audio-taping
  - Tell group that you are taping (get permission)
  - 2 recorders located within group circle
    - Check audio quality beforehand
- Note-takers
  - At least one note-taker
  - Introduce note-takers to group
  - Note-taking process
    - Sit outside of circle so you distract participants as little as possible
    - Draw diagram of circle with names labeled
    - Write down what each person is saying to the best of your ability

# Focus Group Structure

Similar to IDI structure

- Warm Up (greeting participants)
- Opening (definitions, **rules**, procedures)
  - In FGD confidentiality CANNOT be assured, but ask them to try.
- Main Questions (data collection)
- Probes (exploring and confirming)
- Closure (finishing the session)

# Opening

- Explain what a focus group is and the purposes of this specific focus group
  - Explain project in general terms
- State why they were chosen and importance of contribution
  - Encourage full and detailed answers
- Give ground rules for participation
- Establish both rapport and control
  - Ice breaker questions / activities
  - I like asking everybody to choose a pseudonym.

# Main Questions

- How many questions?
  - 1 general, relatively comfortable, exploratory
  - 3 in depth confirmatory
  - 1 validation or open review
- Broad, open ended, and invite discussion and interaction
- Stimulate group conversation
- Community / social views and experiences. NOT personal stories. (Though personal stories may happen).

# Closing

- Let participants know that's all the questions you had
- Repeat back what you heard for validation
- Invite any closing questions or comments (depending on your group dynamics)
- Thank participants and remind them of request for confidentiality
- Make any necessary follow-up plans

# FGD practice

## **Brave volunteers?**

- Facilitator (s)
- 8 FGD participants

# Research question:

## How does stress manifest in the lives of UCSD students?

- What do you think of when somebody mentions stress and school?
- How do you think UCSD students respond to stress?
- Can you describe a stressed out UCSD student?
  - Appearance?
  - Habits?
- What are some things UCSD students do to cope with stress?
- How do you think those coping strategies impact their health?

# Managing Group Dynamics



# Quiet Participant

- *“Susan, we also value your views, do you have any experience of this issue?”*
- Validate response if the quiet individual does participate:
  - *“That was an interesting point Susan, what do others think?”*
  - *“Thank you, Susan. We have also heard this in other groups...”*

# Dominant Participant

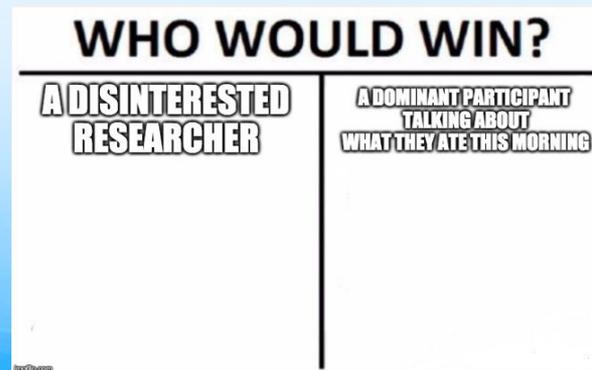
- Try these first:
  - *“Thank you for those views. Perhaps we can hear the views of others on this issue?”*
  - *“Would anyone else like to comment on this point?”*
  - *“Do others have an different or similar experiences?”*
- If dominant participant doesn't pick up on cues/body language:
  - *“Bob, I can tell that you are very passionate about this issue, but we really need to hear how the others feel about it.”*
  - *“Bob, we need to get inputs from everyone on this subject, and we will hear from you after some of the other people have expressed their views.”*

# Self-appointed Experts

- Can cause others to feel that their contributions are less valued
- Moderator needs to disempower the ‘expert’ participant
  - Stressing that *everyone* in the group is an expert on the issue and that’s why they’ve been invited

# Rambling Participant

- One who feels very uncomfortable in the group environment and tends to give long accounts of their experiences
  - “Time-wasters”, can impeded the contributions of other members
- Moderator may:
  - Avoid eye contact with rambling participants
  - Redirect discussion when they pause
  - Interrupt them to seek the view of others (rare case)



(Hennink 2007)

# Next Time

- 4/25: Participatory methods
- In-Depth Interview Assignment Due April 30