Focus Group Methodology Training: Module 1

Introduction

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Modified from: McQuiston, T. & Lippin, T.  *Self-sufficiency research and evaluation pilot project manual.*
Overview of Training Modules

① Introduction
② Recruitment
③ Conduction
④ Data Analysis
⑤ Video Demonstration of a Focus Group
Definitions

- Qualitative data collection method
- Methodically planned discussion
- Group interviews
- Collective conversations
- Instrument of qualitative research
Advantages of Using Focus Groups

- Natural relaxed setting
- Efficient means of gathering larger amount of data in shorter period
- Group dynamics can contribute to discussion
- Can be enjoyable for participants
Limitations

- Larger group – less number of questions
- Experienced moderator
- Data analysis can be confusing
- Logistical barriers in setting up
- Could have group agreement due to peer pressure
Sampling Methods

- Purposive/purposeful
- Not random!
- Clear inclusion and exclusion criteria
- Detailed sample description
- Realistic expectations
Sampling Criteria

- Shared Common Experiences
- Similar
- Differences
- Demographics
- Reducing Bias
Ethical Considerations

• Informed Consent
• Confidentiality
• Incentives and Stipends
• Treating with Respect:
  – Sharing results
How to Evaluate Quality

- Starts before data collection in design stage
- No one set standard or terms to use!
- Many terms used in past few decades:
  - Reliability and validity (rarely used now in qualitative research circles)
  - Rigor and trustworthiness
  - Credibility
  - Authenticity
  - Validation strategies
## Creswell’s Validation Strategies (2013)

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<td>Member Checking</td>
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<td>Peer Review</td>
<td>Rich, thick descriptions</td>
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<td>Negative Case Analysis</td>
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Richardson’s Standards  (2005)

- Substantive contribution
- Aesthetic Merit
- Reflexivity
- Impact
Reliability/Stability

- Inter-coder agreement
- Detailed field notes
- Accurate transcription
- Code Book
- Consensus coding when > 1 researcher
Recommended Validation Strategies for Focus Groups

- Peer review or debriefing
- Clarifying researcher bias
- Member checking
- Rich, thick descriptions of data
- Reflexivity – clarifying researcher bias and assumptions
- Detailed field notes
- Developing code book for codes and themes so there is little variation in interpretation
- Independent coding and then consensus coding (80% recommended at a minimum)
Interview Guide Development

• Designed to cover material – based on literature review, researcher experience in the field
• Facilitate flow of conversation – open ended questions with probes ready if little response
• Flexible – allow for spontaneous conversation
• Pilot test to be sure it flows right and is understandable
Use of Probes

• In general, all questions should be covered but not all probes
• Probes are there to help stimulate the conversation but do not want to be leading toward the researcher’s assumptions
• Asks for clarification
• May direct attention on people who have not responded to question
Conclusion: Module 1

- Definition of a focus group
- Sample selection process
- Ethical considerations
- Validation Strategies
- Development of an Interview Guide

✓ Next Module: Recruitment!