Focus Group Methodology Training: Module 3
Conducting a Focus Group

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Role Clarification

Moderator
• Leads the discussion
• An active participant
• Responsible for conversation flow
• Uses semi-structured, open-ended interview guide
• Can use probes to stimulate discussion

Observer/Note-taker
• Passive participant who records subjective and objective data during interview
• Does not engage in discussion
• May participate by writing down notes for all to see on board or hanging paper on tripod
Moderator Role

Before
- Be mindful
- Get relaxed
- Set up
- Pre-Interview Field notes

During
- Introductions
- Interview guide
- Control reactions
- Listen, Probe
- Summarize

After
- Debrief with team
- Post-Interview field notes
Guiding Principles for Moderator

- Show interest
- Do not be a participant
- Be prepared to hear opposite views
- Moderator qualifications

Engaged

Listen

Nonjudgmental

Trust
Preparing the Setting

• Using digital vs. “old-fashioned” tape recorders
  – Whichever used – test it just prior to focus group!
• Ensuring room is comfortable in advance – temperature, adequate chairs, tripod with large paper pad or blackboard/whiteboard
• Snacks/water if appropriate
• Informed consents printed – 2 copies per person (one for researcher, one for participants)
• Pens available
• Bathroom facilities available
Written Field Notes

- Before Focus Group
- During Focus Group
- After Focus Group

Objective/
Descriptive
Subjective/
Reflective

Debriefing
Reflective/
memoing
Maintaining Control

- Expect and be prepared for all kinds of behavior!
- Let them know you may use hand gestures to control the flow
- Remind – only 1 at a time
- Encourage all in group to contribute
How To Avoid a Disaster!

• Early outreach and recruitment
• Provide directions to site
• Arrive Early
• Pre-test Equipment
• Provide Refreshments
• Two researchers present
  – moderator and recorder
• Have watch/clock easily in view
• Relax and listen and enjoy!
Debriefing

**Process**
- Discuss how conversation flowed
- Examine dynamics of group – conflicts?

**Content**
- What were the major issues identified?
- Was there consensus?

**Lessons Learned**
- What worked and what did not?
- Recommendations for next focus group
Conclusion: Module 3

• Setting important to facilitate discussion
• Effective Moderator is essential
• Second research team member as observer
• Check recording equipment – pre-test
• Field notes: before, during and after
• Team review of process after – debriefing

✔ Next Module – Data Analysis!