The Power of Focus Groups:

Conducting Professional

## Focus Group

## Interviews—2025

**Two full days 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.**

**Continental breakfast, two manuals, refreshments, and handouts are included (no fee for GWU Sociology)**

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**GROUP DIMENSIONS INTERNATIONAL**



**capacity building in qualitative methods**

*Research, training, and facilitation for excellence*

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DAY I—8:30 Meet and Greet—Coffee and…

(Coffee will be available in the room all morning)

9:00-9:45

DEMONSTRATION MOCK FOCUS GROUP

* Preamble and Introductions
* Quantitative versus Quantitative Methods
* Building from Key Informant Interviews (KIs to Focus Group Interviews)

9:45-10:10

Uses of KIs and Focus Groups

* A social scientific approach to interviewing
* Maximum/minimum size of groups
* Duration and timing
* How should KIs and focus groups be used in research?
* Survey or interviews?
* Advantages and disadvantages compared to other methods
* Triangulation
* Limitations, generalizability, and reliability

(10:15-10:30Break)

10:30-12:30

Research Design Issues

* Ethical issues, technical issues, defining the purpose of research
* Key variables: Breaks and number of groups--The “Group Blueprint”
* Secondary variables (sampling and composition)
* Homogeneous vs. heterogeneous groups
* Recruitment and screening of participants

Teams Develop Research Design for DAY II Mock Focus Groups

Tasks: 1. Define the key research question

2. Develop a research design

3. Design a “group blueprint”

4. Develop a screener

5. Determine a recruitment strategy

NOTE: USE the “GUIDELINES FOR TEAM PROJECTS in YOUR MANUAL, Steps 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5

12:30-1:15 Lunch: Continue Teamwork on Research Designs and Questions

1:15-2:30

Development of the Moderator's Guide (Protocol)

* Refining the research question (outcomes/hypotheses)
* Idea generation versus debate generation
* Opening procedures
* Principles for structuring the guide: avoid....
* Closure questions

Teams Develop Moderator’s Guides

2:45-3:15

Moderation Theory and Techniques I

* Communication in the interview
* Complexities of interaction
* Enhancing participation
* Probing, listening
* Time management and staying focused: ensuring even coverage of questions
* What to do when a question has been answered in a previous question
* Non-verbal cues
* Moderator as group leader
* Content vs. Process
* Task vs. Socio-Emotional
* Effective moderation: Facilitating toward even participation/ balancing roles
* Ineffective moderation
* Effective moderation

(3:15-3:30 Break)

3:30-5:00

MOCK FOCUS GROUPS: TEAM I (one hour total)

Processing--Special Issues:

* Controlling dominants and dealing with difficult participants
* Single vs. co-moderators
* Working with various respondent types, organizations, consumer groups
* Incentives; note taking; recording; digital vs. conventional recorders
* Refreshments, atmosphere

Processing TEAM I

Note: Team II will work on interview guides overnight, if necessary.

DAY II—8:30-9:00

8:30…Further review of team designs and questions (optional)

9:00-9:30

Moderation Theory and Techniques II

* Coping with complex questions
* Deflecting questions about "facts"
* Avoiding politicization of the process
* Closure procedures
* Debriefing sessions

9:30-10:30

MOCK FOCUS GROUPS: TEAM II (one hour total

Processing Team II

(10:45-11:00 Break)

11:00-12:30

Introduction to Qualitative Data Analysis

* Linking the guide to action/change
* Maintaining control of the data
* Focusing the data
* Using transcripts
* The place of quantitative data in qualitative data analysis
* Structuring, coding, blocking, reorganizing data: “The Structured Transcript”
* Using the word processor in qualitative data analysis
* Uses of computerized text data analyzers

12:30-1:15 LUNCH

1:15-2:30 p.m.

MOCK FOCUS GROUPS: TEAM III (one hour total)

Processing Team III

2:45-3:00 Break

3:00-4:00

MOCK FOCUS GROUPS: TEAM IV (one hour total)

Processing Team IV

4:00-4:30

Focus Group Training Evaluation