

Course Syllabus (version 1.9.23)
SurvMeth 652: Introduction to Focus Group Interviewing
Research Methods
Summer 2023 -- June 12 – June 13
Summer Institute in Survey Research Techniques
University of Michigan
An online class taught by Richard Krueger, Ph.D.

Course description

This is a Summer Scholar course on planning, conducting, and analyzing focus group interviews. It is designed to help students, researchers, and community members develop the skills needed to conduct defensible research.

Feedback on your focus group study

In this course you will have opportunity to develop a plan for a focus group study, an oral introduction, and set of questions to use in the study. Your instructor will review these assignments (your plan, your introduction, and your questions) and offer feedback including suggestions for improvement. Many class participants find this feedback useful, particularly if they are designing an upcoming study.

Instructors

Name: Richard A. Krueger, Professor Emeritus, University of Minnesota
Email: rkrueger@umn.edu

Goal

The goal of the course is to help students learn how to use focus group interviewing as a research method.

Learning Objectives

After completing this course, students will be able to:

1. Identify the core ingredients of a successful focus group.
2. Identify situations where focus groups could be useful.
3. Develop a plan for a focus group study.
4. Develop questions for a focus group study.
5. Identify characteristics of information-rich participants and recruit participants.
6. Begin a focus group in a way that creates a thoughtful and open environment.
7. Identify the advantages and disadvantages of virtual focus groups.
8. Capture data during a focus group.
9. Analyze and report focus group results.

Course Outline / Daily Schedule

Date	Time	Topic
June 12	9 – 12 noon	Course and student introductions Expectations Overview of focus groups Beginning the focus group How to use course materials
June 12	1 – 4 pm	Virtual research Focus group demonstration Recruiting participants
June 13	9 – 12 noon	Introductions to focus group interviewing
June 13	1 – 4 pm	Planning Developing questions Moderating Analysis Questions and answers Optional time to discuss projects
June 20	midnight	Assignments due

- Zoom meetings on June 12 and 13 are on Eastern Time – Ann Arbor time zone

Class Materials

- 20 short video segments – Internet locations in syllabus
- PowerPoint slides of 20 video segments (sent to students before class)
- 2 video demonstrations
- 4 video lectures
- Notes: Focus Group Interviewing (sent to students before class)
- Textbook

20 short video segments

A series of 20 short (4 – 10 minute) video presentations by Richard Krueger on the basics of focus group interviewing. Internet locations of these videos are listed in the class syllabus.

PowerPoint slides

PowerPoint slides for 20 YouTube video presentations. These are the slides that accompany the 20 short video segments.

2 video demonstrations

Short focus groups are demonstrated in two video presentations. One presentation is specifically on moderating skills and the second presentation is an actual focus group on healthy living. Internet locations listed in syllabus.

4 video lectures

Lectures by R. Krueger and Mary Anne Casey on Developing Questions, Recruiting Participants, Moderating the Focus Group and Analyzing Focus Group Results (34 – 46 minutes each) Internet locations listed in syllabus.

Notes

Notes: Focus Group Interviewing” (January 2023) by Richard A. Krueger, University of Minnesota. 20 pages.

Textbook

Krueger, R. A. & Casey, M. A. (2015). *Focus groups: A practical guide for applied research*. 5th Edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. (5th edition is recommended but 4th edition is acceptable. A free pdf copy of the 4th edition is available from the instructor upon request.)

How the class instruction will occur

This class will likely differ from other online classes you’ve had. The core instructional materials are sent to students before the class. You will be expected to be familiar with these materials and use them if you decide to submit the assignments. The Zoom class sessions will not be lectures in the traditional sense, but rather a chance to provide you with needed background information, demonstrations, practice sessions, and supplementary information. You will be expected to proceed through the materials at your own pace. But be mindful of the due date of the assignments.

Course Expectations

Each class participant will be expected to participate in the Zoom sessions and be familiar with the videos and readings.

Summer Scholar -- Non-Credit Students: The assignments are optional for Summer Scholars (non-credit students). In past classes over half of the students submitted one or more of the assignments. These assignments are often helpful for students who anticipate conducting a focus group study in the future and would like feedback before they begin the process. I will review each assignment that is submitted and offer a critique pointing out the strengths and areas for improvement. The three assignments are required for those who request a letter grade.

We expect that all students will participate in the Zoom calls, watch the video sessions, and read the text.

Assignments and Expectations

1. A plan for a focus group study

Submit a plan using the instructions in Video 03: Planning the focus group study. Use the ingredients on p. 13 of “Notes” as the basis of your plan. If additional background information is needed to explain your study, include it on a page or two after the completed template. Due on June 20 (by midnight).

2. Focus group questions

A typical two-hour focus group in the academic tradition usually consists of 10 to 14 open-ended questions. An online focus group or telephone focus group usually has 6 to 7 open-ended questions. These questions should be conversational (written using words the participants use—no jargon) and sequenced carefully. Questions should be numbered with estimated time needed for each question. At the top of the page indicate the purpose of the study and the anticipated focus group participants. Before submitting, review the videos: 04 Types of questions in a focus group, 05 Developing questions for a focus group, and 06 Examples of focus group questions. Note examples of format on p.15 of Notes. Due on June 20.

3. An introduction for your focus groups

The introduction is the first thing the moderator says at the beginning of the focus group interview. It is short and snappy. Again, use words the participants would use if they were talking about the study. Include why you are conducting the study, what you will do with the results, and how it will benefit people. Students will practice this introduction on the June 14th online class and receive feedback from the instructors and other students. The written introduction is due on June 20. Note the examples in Videos 09 – 13 and on p. 7-8 of “Notes”.

Instructions for submitting your assignments:

1. Send all 3 assignments together in 1 file (Word document preferred) to rkrueger@umn.edu
2. Use the following naming protocol for the file name: Your name / Assignments SurvMeth 652
3. Send assignments as an attachment in a New email to both instructors (do not reply to an earlier message) In the subject line: Your name / Assignments SurvMeth 652
4. Assignments are due at midnight on Tuesday, June 20.

Course Sessions and Readings

How to Proceed -- We recommend the following sequence:

INTRODUCTION – We recommend doing the Introduction section before class begins.

01 - What is a focus group? (4:34 minutes)

02 - What makes it research? (3:56 minutes)

Reading: Chapter 1 “Overview of focus groups”

PLANNING

03 - Planning the focus group study (2:59 minutes)

Reading: Chapter 2 “Planning the focus group study”

DEVELOPING QUESTIONS

04 - Types of questions in a focus group (6:59 minutes)

05 - Developing questions for a focus group (7:52 minutes)

06 - Examples of focus group questions (7:18 minutes) Video

Lecture: Developing Questions (46:10 minutes) Reading:

Chapter 3 “Developing a questioning route”

RECRUITING PARTICIPANTS

07 - Locating focus group participants (9:15 minutes)

08 - Recruiting focus group participants (8:57 minutes)

Video Lecture: Recruiting Participants (34:55 minutes)

Reading: Chapter 4: “Participants in a focus group”

MODERATING

09 - Moderating skills – Before the group (7:34 minutes)

10 - Moderating skills – During the group (9:38 minutes)

11 - The role of the assistant moderator (5:26 minutes)

12 - Tips for moderating – Part 1 (7:23 minutes)

13 - Tips for moderating – Part 2 (7:04 minutes)

Video Lecture: Moderating the Focus Group (34:27 minutes)

Video Demonstration: Moderating a Focus Group (30:13 minutes)

Video Demonstration Focus Group (32:04 minutes)

Reading: Chapter 5: “Moderating skills”

ANALYSIS

14 - Capturing data during the focus group (4:37 minutes)

15 - Taking field notes in focus groups (7:50 minutes)

16 - Transcribing focus groups (7:09)

17 - Analysis basics ((6:38 minutes)

18 - Classic analysis (6:10 minutes)
19 - Deciding what is important in the focus group analysis (5:31 minutes)
20 - Preparing a focus group report (6:37 minutes)
Video Lecture: Analysis (41:04 minutes)
Reading: Chapter 6: "Analyzing focus group results"
Chapter 7: "Reporting"

Additional References

Byseth, Jean, et al. (2003) *Moderating to the max*. Ithaca, NY: Paramount Market Publishing.

Glaser, B. & Strauss, A. 1967. *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*. New York: Aldine De Gruyter.

Grob, G.F. (2015). Writing for impact. In K. Newcomer et al. (Eds.). *Handbook of practical program evaluation*. 4th Ed. (pp 739-764). Hoboken, N.J.: Wiley

Guest, G., A. Bunce and L. Johnson. (2006). "How many interviews are enough?: An Experiment with Data Saturation and Variability." *Field Methods* 2006; 18; 59.

Hennink, M.M. (2007). *International focus group Research: A handbook for the health and social sciences*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Krueger, R.A., & Casey, M.A. (2015). Focus group interviewing. In K Newcomer & H. Hatry (Eds.), *Handbook of practical program evaluation*. 4th Ed. (pp. 500 - 528). Hoboken, N.J.: Wiley.

Krueger, Richard A. (September / October 2006), "Analyzing focus group interviews." *Journal of Wound Ostomy and Continence Nursing Society* pp 478 - 481.

Krueger, Richard A. (1998). *Analyzing and reporting focus group results*. (Volume 6). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage

Krueger, Richard A. (1998). *Developing questions for focus groups*. (Volume 3) Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Krueger, Richard A. (1998). *Moderating focus groups*. (Volume 4) Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Krueger, Richard A. and Jean A. King (1998). *Involving community members in focus groups*. (Volume 5). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Morgan, D. (1998). *Planning focus groups*. (Volume 2) Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Internet Locations for Learning Modules on YouTube

SurvMeth 652: Introduction to Focus Group Interviewing Research Methods

1 - What is a focus group? (4:34 minutes)

Introduction to the series and a description of focus group characteristics.
https://youtu.be/bdD6l_6WXYk

2 - What makes it research? (3:56 minutes)

How focus group interviewing is different from casual conversation and why it is considered to be a research procedure.
<https://youtu.be/oyf46RGbQ8E>

3 - Planning the focus group study (2:59 minutes)

The ingredients of a focus group plan and the benefit of having a plan.
https://youtu.be/dD4P_GXjvlc

4 - Types of questions in a focus group (6:59 minutes)

Focus group has different types of questions, each with a special purpose: opening, introductory, transition, key and ending questions.
<https://youtu.be/LeXfQOIMKCI>

5 - Developing questions for a focus group (7:52 minutes)

Five tips for developing successful focus group questions
<https://youtu.be/4eMlyIhrn3E>

6 - Examples of focus group questions (7:18 minutes)

Examples of focus group questions with suggestions on how to test your questions.
<https://youtu.be/aqjmFDWZCao>

7 - Locating focus group participants (9:15 minutes)

Discussion of strategies for finding people to participate in focus group research.
<https://youtu.be/SkiuFV61TjA>

8 - Recruiting focus group participants (8:57 minutes)

An overview of how to contact potential participants and get them to actually attend the focus group. A discussion of types of incentives and the importance of personalizing the invitation.
<https://youtu.be/b8MFUJ-ncul>

9 - Moderating skills - Before the group (7:34 minutes)

Before that actual focus group the moderator must take certain steps to ensure the group will be successful.
https://youtu.be/ROq4_FdlKJk

10 - Moderating skills – During the group (9:38 minutes)

How to introduce the focus group, moderating tips, creating a conversation and conducting a debriefing.

<https://youtu.be/1FJzkNFzE1M>

11 - Role of the assistant moderator (5:26 minutes)

An overview of the tasks and responsibilities of the assistant moderator.

https://youtu.be/7_aj85e6JAw

12 - Tips for moderating – Part 1 (7:23 minutes)

Four tips that result in a successful focus groups including hosting, using pauses & probes, working with different types of participants, and creating a conversation.

<https://youtu.be/qFz8293Sg88>

13 - Tips for moderating – Part 2 (7:04 minutes)

Five additional tips including the degree of control, using visuals & activities, watching the time, handling wrong information and ending the focus group.

<https://youtu.be/Sagvm4CIQ10>

14 - Capturing data during the focus group (4:37 minutes)

An overview of the variety of ways to capture data in a focus groups, including memory, field notes, papers & notes, audio recording, laptops and video.

<https://youtu.be/fb7y4msVBaE>

15 - Taking field notes in focus groups (7:50 minutes)

The importance of consistency in taking notes with examples of note-taking styles suitable for focus group interviews.

<https://youtu.be/ZqR66kKUKjg>

16 - Transcribing focus groups (7:09 minutes)

How to prepare a transcript and protocol that will make the transcript easier to analyze.

<https://youtu.be/piAGPwLEJgg>

17 - Analysis basics (6;38 minutes)

An introduction to focus group analysis with suggestions on how to select the type of analysis needed, and the importance of being systematic and having verifiable protocol

https://youtu.be/_YdKABhIqaY

18 - Classical method (6:10 minutes)

An overview of a traditional way of focus group analysis using transcripts that are cut up, sorted, labeled and described.

<https://youtu.be/N9E9bSLgsxA>

19 - Deciding what is important in focus group analysis (5:31 minutes)

Five suggestions on how to determine priorities in focus group analysis.

<https://youtu.be/CXMJpboYNN8>

20 - Preparing a focus group report (6:37 minutes)

An overview of types of reports suitable for focus groups and suggestions on preparing the report.

https://youtu.be/l_FRZWYwYQU

Video Demonstrations

Demonstration Focus Group (32:04 minutes) Richard Krueger leads a demonstration focus group on healthy living.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=scyTIRNDu_A&list=PLC0p0gB0GhHlmfSeNPW-mpyxOsjrj0HBY&index=5

Moderating a Focus Group (30:13 minutes) This 30-minute video demonstrates a number of moderating techniques useful in conducting focus group interviews.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xjHZsEcSqwo&feature=em-upload_owner

Video Lectures by Richard Krueger and Mary Anne Casey

Moderating the Focus Group Interview (34:27 minutes) Richard Krueger and Mary Anne Casey present tips on moderating a focus group.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hpaPRTtKwbs&list=PLC0p0gB0GhHlmfSeNPW-mpyxOsjrj0HBY&index=2&t=13s>

Developing Questions for a Focus Group Interview (46:10 minutes) Richard Krueger and Mary Anne Casey offer suggestions on how to develop focus group questions.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ISOgLWdm5B8&list=PLC0p0gB0GhHlmfSeNPW-mpyxOsjrj0HBY&index=2>

Recruiting Participants for a Focus Group Interview (34:55 minutes) Richard Krueger and Mary Anne Casey present a strategy for focus group recruiting.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lsclIXG4E8&list=PLC0p0gB0GhHlmfSeNPW-mpyxOsjrj0HBY&index=3>

Analysis of the Focus Group Interview (41:04 minutes) Richard Krueger and Mary Anne Casey present tips and ideas for analyzing focus group interviews.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5sMe_iQfd0s&list=PLC0p0gB0GhHlmfSeNPW-mpyxOsjrj0HBY&index=4