Chapter 5: Gathering Qualitative Data
INTRODUCTION

Researchers electing to engage in a comprehensive campus climate assessment process may want to consider conducting focus groups with students to complement the data gathered from the survey. While the survey is the centerpiece of the campus climate assessment process, the qualitative data provided from the focus groups can build upon the knowledge gained from the survey. Focus groups can be conducted at any point during the campus climate assessment process; researchers at Rutgers University–New Brunswick conducted the focus groups following the conclusion of the survey to fill in gaps in knowledge that arose from initial survey results.

The focus groups are intended to strengthen the results gathered from the campus climate survey and provide a deeper insight into students’ attitudes and knowledge about campus sexual violence. Campuses have flexibility in the number of focus groups they choose to conduct, the types of students and/or student groups to include in the focus groups, the recruitment strategies for focus groups, as well as the location(s) of focus groups. The purpose of this chapter is to provide guidance to colleges and universities seeking to conduct focus groups as a part of a comprehensive assessment process.

WHY CONDUCT FOCUS GROUPS?

Focus groups are a recommended component of the campus climate assessment process as the campus climate survey results may not be able to fully inform researchers of students’ perceptions of campus sexual violence and of available resources, creating a gap in knowledge. Follow-up focus groups after a survey allows researchers to understand the survey results in greater depth and conduct an “exploratory” investigation into the meaning behind the quantitative data (Doody, Slevin, & Taggart, 2013a; Morgan, 1997).

Focus groups also grant researchers the ability to ask specific subsets of the student population about their experiences with sexual violence. It is critical to make sure that a diverse representation of perspectives is gathered during the campus climate assessment, and in particular, that any underrepresented groups have the opportunity to voice their experiences. Groups such as lesbian, gay, transgender, and questioning/queer (LGBTQ) students and students affiliated with various cultural centers may have different perspectives on sexual violence than the majority. Focus groups with specific subsets of the student population may also highlight possible gaps in outreach as well as services available on campus for these students. The findings from the focus groups with both the general student body as well as specific subsets of the student population can then be combined with the findings from the survey to develop an action plan for improving the overall campus response to sexual violence.

At Rutgers University–New Brunswick, we conducted two types of focus groups: 1) with those who belong to specific subgroups on campus, and 2) with those who belong to the general student body.

PARTNERS

Each campus needs to identify which “subgroups” are important to include in the focus groups. In addition, research indicates that certain groups are at a greater risk for experiencing sexual violence, such as LGBTQ students, and therefore this is an important group to include. Additionally, research suggests that athletes and fraternity/sorority members may be more at risk of perpetrating sexual violence so these groups are important to consider as well. Hearing from survivors also offers a critical perspective on the topic and allows survivors to have their voices included. Based on the campus, there may be other student groups or populations that are identified as a priority to include in the focus groups.

In order to conduct focus groups with students from the general student body as well as with those from specific subsets of the student population, it is recommended that
Focus Groups Held at Rutgers University– New Brunswick

- Male Athletes
- Female Athletes
- Mixed Athletes
- Female Resident Assistants
- Male Resident Assistants
- The Paul Robeson Cultural Center
- The Center for Social Justice Education and LGBTQ Communities
- Rutgers University– New Brunswick Student Assembly
- The Center For Latino Arts & Culture
- General Undergraduate Male (three different focus groups with undergrad males)
- General Undergraduate Female (three different focus groups with undergrad females)
- Sexual Violence Survivors
- Graduate Males
- Graduate Females
- Greek Males
- Greek Females

Researchers form collaborative partnerships with diverse stakeholders across campus. Chapter 2 of this guide emphasizes the importance of creating an Advisory Board to assist the research team in planning and conducting campus climate assessments. The Advisory Board can provide suggestions for recruitment and may have involvement with specific subsets of the student population. When working with specific subsets of the student population it is important that as researchers we approach these various groups of students with the knowledge that issues of confidentiality may be paramount, especially with LGBTQ students and survivors, and that focus groups conducted with under-represented groups (i.e. cultural centers) are conducted in a culturally competent way. The Advisory Board may also serve as an essential resource for helping researchers navigate such issues.

When planning for focus groups, researchers at Rutgers University–New Brunswick relied on connections with campus entities that were established during the preparation and administration of the campus climate survey. For example, researchers chose to conduct a focus group with sexual violence survivors. In order to recruit students as well as prepare for the survivors focus group, researchers consulted with the Director of the Office of Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance, who served as both an Advisory Board member and a collaborative partner throughout the campus climate survey. The Director also helped to recruit student sexual violence survivors in addition to helping researchers draft language to use during the survivor focus group regarding disclosure and support.

DESIGN

Qualitative data collection may take many forms including interviews and focus groups. Interviews, while a good method of understanding individual students’ perspectives on certain issues, are very time intensive and may not yield data representing the full range of opinions across a large student body. Focus groups, on the other hand, provide a method of gathering a diverse range of students’ perspectives (Brown, 1999; Patton, 2015) as well as a broad understanding of the campus’ perception of sexual violence. The pros and cons of each method of qualitative data collection should be weighed within the context of the institution in order to find the best fit for the research needs at that school.
Researchers may use qualitative data as a means to guide the survey or, alternatively, as a method to further understand survey data. Qualitative data collection can occur at any point in the campus climate assessment process depending on the researcher’s purpose in collecting qualitative data. The campus climate surrounding sexual violence is not easily identifiable or measurable, and therefore qualitative data can help shed light on aspects which may be complex and little understood through a survey alone.

**Focus group guide**

The focus group guide is the instrument for gathering data through a group discussion. The development of the campus climate survey, discussed in Chapter 4 of this guide, began with searching for the answers to the question “What do we want to know?”. Creation of the focus group guide should begin with same type of question. Depending on whether the focus groups occur before or after the survey, the guide may contain questions encompassing what will be asked on the survey or follow up questions to the survey. It is important to remember that qualitative data collection is conducted in order to understand specific information, but the data collected is only as good as the questions asked. If the questions asked within the guide are not well phrased or do not address the issues at hand, then students will not speak to their experience or knowledge on the issue. Because focus groups are time limited, it is crucial to select the main areas in which the researchers are interested and center the questions in these areas. A few main issues to consider are the following:

- **Question order.** Often focus group guides start with questions that are general and easy to answer, allowing the discussion to move along to more specific and sensitive questions (Makhoul & Nakkash, 2009; Plummer-D’Amato, 2008). The general questions introduce participants to the flow of the group, create a comfortable speaking environment, and generate a group dynamic before asking about topics such as sexual violence. Researchers at Rutgers University-New Brunswick began their focus groups with questions about students’ sense of community and the campus climate survey before asking about sexual violence. See Appendix A, Focus Group Guide for the full guide used for Rutgers University-New Brunswick’s focus groups.

- **Open-ended.** Questions on the focus group guide should be open ended (Morgan, 1997). The intent of the questions is to generate dialogue and conversation surrounding the topic at hand. Closed ended questions including “yes” and “no” questions often only elicit a simple one word answer. As an example, Rutgers University-New Brunswick students were asked “What kinds of
information have you received about sexual violence since coming to Rutgers University– New Brunswick?” as opposed to “Have you received information about sexual violence since coming to Rutgers University– New Brunswick?” This open ended question allowed participants to not only indicate if they had received information about sexual violence but also explain the types of information they had received.

Probes. Another important aspect of the focus group guide is including appropriate probes which prompt students to further explain their answers or help clarify the question if participants are not providing appropriate information. Probes may take the form of rephrasing the question with different words, giving examples, or asking a related or follow-up question. The focus group guide used by researchers at Rutgers University–New Brunswick contained many probes which the facilitators could choose to use depending on the individual focus group dynamics.

Word selection. It is important to remember that words matter. Words commonly used by researchers or university administrators may not be understood by the general student body. The language of the questions should be clear, consistent, and use simple everyday words. Other more technical or unfamiliar words, such as sexual assault vs. sexual harassment, may be confusing to students unless definitions are provided.

Sensitive topics. Finally, due to the nature of the focus groups in addressing sexual violence, researchers may wish to include language to prepare students for explicit or sensitive questions. Investigators might include language such as a “sensitive topic warning” within the questionnaire as well as a “check-in” with focus groups participants to ensure no one is feeling unduly distressed. In addition, as discussed previously, questions about sexual violence should not be asked at the start of the group but only after a period of time when participants have become comfortable within the group setting.

Informed Consent

As with the campus climate survey, respondents in the focus groups must provide their informed consent to participate. The language on the informed consent form may be similar to that of the survey and should be approved by the university’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) or similar department. The issue of possible distress caused by questions in the focus groups should be covered. Sexual violence survivors might find that questions about sexual violence trigger difficult or painful memories. Similarly, focus group participants might find it challenging or uncomfortable to listen to sexual violence survivors’ experiences. However, the opposite might occur as well. Survivors may feel empowered as they are impacting the issue through discussing their personal experience. Other focus groups participants might empathize with survivors and learn about the issue of sexual violence through listening to survivors share their experiences. Researchers at Rutgers University-New Brunswick received positive feedback after the focus groups with sexual violence survivors. Additionally, during the focus groups none of the participants appeared distressed or left the group as a result of distress caused by the group. Furthermore, researchers should provide appropriate local resources for sexual violence survivors, particularly when conducting focus groups with sexual violence survivors. If such focus groups are being held, researchers may wish to recruit participants from the university’s counseling or center that addresses violence to ensure these students are receiving treatment and the focus group is minimally harmful to them.

An additional and unique concern for focus groups is that of confidentiality within the group setting. Anything said within the groups will be heard by all the participants in the group who may then repeat it outside the group. All participants should be informed that confidentiality is not guaranteed due to this dynamic. Additionally, in the informed consent, introduction script, and at the end of the focus group, researchers should request that students consider the group discussion as private and not repeat the information outside the room.

Collecting demographic information

In order to understand who is participating in the focus groups, researchers may wish to collect demographic information from the students. Such demographic information can help researchers distinguish who participated in the focus groups; how representative they were of the student body; and the diversity of the viewpoints found within the groups. This can be done in a number of ways including having students provide demographic information when registering for the focus group (via a website, email or mail-in form) or collecting such information during
the focus group itself. In general, in order to ensure confidentiality of this information, an identification number can be used in place of names on the demographic forms. Researchers should decide which type of information they are interested in collecting including gender, race, age, graduation date, college major, living arrangement, student group affiliation, etc. Additionally, questions may be included which ask students’ perceptions, attitudes, and knowledge of sexual violence resources or policies. See Appendix B, Demographic Questions for the form used at Rutgers University-New Brunswick to collect such information.

Size and number

Each campus will have to determine the number of focus groups to conduct based on campus size and student population. For example, colleges and universities with a large athletics program may choose to have an athlete specific focus group, whereas a college with a smaller athletics program may feel that this is not necessary.

While the number of focus groups that campuses choose to conduct may vary based on campuses’ demographics, the number of students per focus group should be consistent throughout the project. Based on research as well as the experience of researchers at Rutgers University-New Brunswick, each focus group should strive to have between eight to ten student participants. Focus groups with less than eight participants may result in a limited range of ideas being represented while a large group of participants may be difficult to manage (Morgan, 1997). Researchers are also encouraged to conduct same-sex focus groups when possible, as well as have same-sex facilitators to conduct focus groups (Heary & Hennessy, 2002; Patterson, 2015; Morgan, 1997; Mouzon, Clark, Coleman, & Ogletree, 2005). Due to the sensitivity of the issues being discussed in the group, it may be inappropriate to invite both men and women to participate in the same group and could dissuade honest, open discussion throughout the focus groups. However, when conducting focus groups with specific subsets of the student population, researchers may not be able to recruit a large enough number of male students and female students within that population to conduct same-sex focus groups. In this case, researchers may wish to conduct mixed gendered focus groups. While there are benefits of conducting same-sex focus groups, mixed gendered focus groups may be the best option for certain student specialty populations, granting researchers the ability to conduct a group with a large enough number of participants. When conducting mixed-gender focus groups, it is recommended that both a male and a female facilitator conduct the group.

Piloting

Piloting a focus group with several students is a useful method for determining if focus group materials, such as the focus group guide, demographic form, and consent form, are appropriate and clear for students. The pilot should take place prior to conducting the first focus group on campus and should be conducted with enough time so that researchers can make necessary changes to materials.

For the purpose of the pilot, facilitators are interested only in students’ feedback of the overall focus group and materials as opposed to students’ answers to the questions. Facilitators can lead a discussion with students following the conclusion of the pilot focus group to elicit feedback from students. Facilitators may also wish to ask students additional questions, such as the best time of day to conduct focus groups, best locations to conduct focus groups, and the best method to remind students about the focus groups. Facilitators may also wish to collect written feedback from students. The written and verbal feedback from students can then be compiled and discussed amongst the research team to determine if changes to focus group materials or questions are necessary.

Outreach

To foster student participation for the focus groups, a communications strategy may be necessary. Researchers at Rutgers University-New Brunswick developed an outreach plan; however, because of the strong foundation that was created for the campus climate survey campaign, a large number of students signed up for the focus groups quickly following the initial outreach email and all additional outreach efforts were truncated.

Researchers developing an outreach plan for the focus groups are encouraged to utilize outreach avenues similar to those used for the campus climate survey (see chapter 4), such as e-mails from university leadership to demonstrate the importance for student involvement,
Text for Confirmation Message

Hello,

You have indicated that you are interested in participating in an upcoming (name of project) focus group.

Your participation in (name of project) focus group is very important to us so listed below is the dates for your upcoming focus groups.

DATE: 
TIME: 
LOCATION: 

Please reply to this email with 'confirm' to confirm, or 'cancel' to cancel.

There will be food served at the beginning of each focus group and ___ cash provided immediately following the focus group just for participating!

Your voice is very important to us and we look forward to hearing from you. Join (name of project) focus group to tell us more and be part of the change!

Further questions or to sign up via phone, please contact________________:

Thank you, __________________:

Scheduling

When determining the schedule for the focus groups, researchers are encouraged to select dates and times that do not conflict with prior student events, midterms or finals, or holidays to maximize student participation. Based on discussions with students, the research team at Rutgers University-New Brunswick decided to host focus groups in the late evenings on weekdays.

It may be helpful to use a web-based scheduling program and to have a protocol in place. See Appendix C, Scheduling Protocol for the protocol used at Rutgers University-New Brunswick to schedule focus groups with students.

Once an adequate number of students sign up for a focus group slot, researchers are encouraged to determine a method for sending confirmation to students that have been selected to participate in the focus group, as well as a method for sending a reminder to students about the focus group. Appointment reminder software is available to send both text and email confirmation and reminders to students. The box, Text for Confirmation, Message, includes language researchers may wish to use for confirmation messages with students. Prior to scheduling the dates and times for focus groups, researchers may wish to ensure that their institution has rooms available for the focus groups which can comfortably hold student participants as well as offer privacy. Researchers may wish to look at rooms in advance to determine if they appropriately meet these needs and then book the rooms in advance, once a schedule for the focus groups are finalized.

Conducting focus groups

The process of running focus groups should be uniform across the groups to ensure the data is gathered under similar settings. This helps guarantee that data from each
focus group is comparable. There are also steps which researchers can take to guarantee the process goes smoothly, data is collected appropriately, and students’ rights as human subjects are protected. Researchers at Rutgers University-New Brunswick developed both materials and procedural checklists to be followed at each focus group. In this way, the procedures used across the groups were uniform.

**Rules and guidelines**

Before starting a focus group, the facilitators should introduce themselves, go over the purpose of the group, and detail rules and guidelines for the group. Most participants in the groups will have never taken part in a focus group and will be unsure of basics such as when they can speak, how to address other participants, and what the group entails. Additionally, students may be nervous about the knowledge they are expected to bring to the group. The facilitators can help lessen participants’ nervousness and make sure everyone understands their contribution through an introduction script. The points covered during this introduction may include those detailed within the informed consent, such as confidentiality and the purpose of the study, as well as new information regarding the flow of the group (interrupting, quiet participants, overlapping comments, etc.). The box, *Key Point or Introduction*, lists some of the main points that researchers may wish to cover. See Appendix D for the full introduction text used by researchers at Rutgers University-New Brunswick.

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### The Materials Checklist

- Two writing utensils
- A notepad with sufficient paper for taking notes during the entire focus group
- Name tents/plaques
- Recording equipment
  - two recorders
  - extra batteries
- Consent forms (one copy for the interviewer plus one to keep for the student)
- Extra pens for participants to sign consent forms
- Demographic forms for all participants
- Focus group guide
- Focus group protocol
- Debrief discussion tool
- Resource handouts
- Lock box
- Payment
- Receipts for all participants’ payment
Table 2  Key Points for Introduction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TOPIC</th>
<th>CONTENT AND CONCERNS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WELCOME</td>
<td>• Introduce facilitators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Thank participants for their time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STUDY INFORMATION</td>
<td>• State the purpose of the focus group and why it is being conducted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GROUND RULES</td>
<td>• One person speaks at a time and participants can respond to each other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Researchers are looking for opinions, not right or wrong answers</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Respect time and let others speak if need be</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Ask everyone to maintain confidentiality of the other participants</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Gain verbal consent to audio record the group</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Ask participants to turn cell phones off during the group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PERSONAL DISCLOSURE</td>
<td>• Researchers must understand if their institution mandates some incidents to be</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>reported (e.g., child abuse) and this is articulated to the group</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Due to the non-therapeutic group setting, participants may be asked not to</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>share any personal victimization such as sexual assault</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONCLUSION</td>
<td>• Ensure all informed consents and demographic forms are completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Answer any questions from participants</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Start the recording</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Recording

The information shared during the focus groups should be captured and recorded in some manner. This can be done through copious note taking or audio recording. Both methods have pros and cons. See the box entitled Note Taking versus Audio Recording for the pros and cons of each method. If the budget allows for it, audio recording followed by transcription of the audio recordings is the preferred methods to ensure maximum capture of the data (participants’ quotes) are accurately recorded (Patton, 2015).
Table 3. Note Taking versus Audio Recording

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>NOTE TAKING</th>
<th>AUDIO RECORDING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>PROS</strong></td>
<td>Requires less time and equipment</td>
<td>Very detailed and captures all information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Less costly to transcribe</td>
<td>Requires less work and people power during the focus group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CONS</strong></td>
<td>Less detailed</td>
<td>Data can be lost through technology malfunctions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>More likely to miss critical data</td>
<td>Time intensive and costly to transcribe</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participants of a focus group should be informed of the audio recording process as part of the informed consent process. This information can also be verbalized during the introduction to the focus group. The IRB within each school may have mandatory language on audio recording which has to be included on the informed consent form.

The following Informed Consent Language for Audio Recording was used by the researchers at Rutgers University–New Brunswick:

“This discussion will be audio recorded and then transcribed. Only researchers will have access to the recording. When the audio is transcribed, a number will be used to identify you, not your name. If you say anything that you believe at a later point may be hurtful and/or damage your reputation, then you can ask the interviewer to rewind the recording and record over such information OR you can ask that certain text be removed from the dataset/transcripts. The recording(s) will be stored in a locked cabinet within a locked office until they are fully transcribed, they will then be deleted from the audio recorder. The transcribed audio recording will be stored electronically on a university server only accessible to research staff with a password.”

**Participant Identification**

Due to confidentiality concerns, researchers may request that participants do not identify themselves by name during the audio recording process. This concern is particularly pressing during focus groups with sexual violence survivors. If participants’ names are also not included on the demographic form, using instead a unique identification number for each participant, this gives students an extra assurance that their privacy has been safeguarded. Researchers at Rutgers University-New Brunswick assigned each focus group participant an identification number which was used on the demographic form and participants also stated their number before each time they spoke. In this way, researchers were able to link demographic information with each and every statement made during the course of the focus group discussion. See the box below, **Mandated Reporting**, for information on mandated reporting under which institutions may be required to report certain types of events.
Mandated Reporting

Mandated reporting is the required reporting of certain types of behaviors or events which are disclosed in settings such as counseling or research. Often any references to child abuse and threats to harm self or another human being are mandated to be reported under various ethical guidelines (e.g., National Association of Social Workers Mandatory Reporting Requirements). Additionally, some institutions may have rules for professors and staff members, including researchers, which require them to report these types of utterances. Additionally, domestic and sexual violence may be required to be reported under the rules of the institution although there may be an exception for research, as opposed to counseling or teaching staff. Researchers should clarify all such rules before starting focus groups and be clear how they will deal with such requirements. Because the researchers at Rutgers University-New Brunswick did not wish to violate the students’ confidentiality and trust, as part of the introduction script (see Appendix D), the researchers emphasized that students should not report any personal experience of sexual violence within the focus groups setting. Instead, students were asked to discuss any experiences in the third person (“a friend”) in order to ensure that a) students’ confidentiality within the group setting was maintained and b) the researchers would not be required to report an incident which a student did not wish to be reported.

Facilitators

A critical piece of every focus group is the facilitators who run the group. Some tips include:

- Two facilitators are recommended and should be matched to the gender of the focus group participants (Morgan, 1997).

- The lead facilitator typically asks questions on the guide and probes as needed to elicit more information. The co-facilitator can keep time, check the audio recorder’s functioning, deal with unexpected events and latecomers, and ensure participants state their name or identification number when speaking.

- Both facilitators can assist with setting up the room, bringing supplies and food, consenting participants into the study, paying participants, and creating an environment conducive for the discussion.

- All facilitators should receive training both on conducting the focus groups as well as the questionnaire which will be used.

- Particular qualities to look for in focus groups facilitators include openness, ability to engage with a diverse range of people and experiences, quick thinking, ability to problem solve, skills in facilitating conversation, and listening (Doodly, Slevin, & Taggart, 2013b).

- Good empathic understanding particularly when conducting focus groups with sexual violence survivors, is critical in focus group discussions on sensitive topics

Eliciting Information and Probing

Each focus group has a different dynamic. Sometimes conversation flows easily and participants are knowledgeable and respond readily to the questions being asked. Other times, participants may be nervous, feel they should say the “correct” thing, do not understand what is being asked, are derailed and speak off the topic of interest, or simply do not have knowledge or strong opinions about the question being asked. These issues can be overcome with advanced planning which includes training for facilitators on effective probing as well as selecting facilitators with prior focus group facilitation or other relevant skills (such as social work training). The research team should be flexible enough to identify troubled spots within focus groups and effectively respond in the group setting itself or by changing the focus group guide if needed.

Incentives

Focus groups can last from 60 to 90 minutes which is a long time period for busy students. Researchers should offer appropriate incentives to draw students to participate in these groups (Morgan, 1997). If no incentive is offered, some students may still participate in the groups however these are most likely to be students who have deep felt opinions or an investment in the issue. These students may know more than the average student about issues such as sexual assault policies or resources.
Thus their views and knowledge, while important for that subset of the population, do not represent those of a typical student. The incentives offered must be large enough to draw even students who otherwise might not participate in a focus group on an issue such as sexual violence. A common incentive is cash payments and the provision of food during the focus groups. If cash is used, a plan for transporting the cash, ensuring its safety during the group, and dispersion to participants with receipts should be created before the focus groups begin.

ANALYSIS

Conducting focus groups and gathering the data is only one step in the qualitative data process. Next, all the information has to be analyzed. The whole process of analysis is beyond the scope of this guide but there are several important points to remember (for more information see Doody, Slevin, & Taggart, 2013c; Morgan, 1997; Patton, 2015; Plumer-D’Amato, 2008b):

- Transcription is the first step and can be costly and time consuming.
- Analysis is also a lengthy process which begins with developing a coding scheme.
- Coding is a process of identifying pertinent themes which standout in the focus groups.
- Coding can be used both to look at the themes common across the focus groups and differences between different focus groups (e.g., different understanding of sexual assault policies between differing student groups).
- The coding scheme may follow the questions asked on the focus group guide.
- Coders should be trained and come to an agreement on the codes before starting analysis.
- There are several well respected software packages (e.g., Atlas.ti and QSR NVivo) for coding qualitative data. Software packages such as these can expedite the coding process.
- A small but significant percent of transcripts should be double coded, independently coded by two researchers, to ensure reliability between the coders.

- At the end of the coding process, it is recommended that institutions have a plan in place to compare the findings from the survey with those from the focus groups.

CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has briefly touched on some of the issues which researchers will face when gathering qualitative data. The issues covered here are only some of a host of considerations researchers should take into account. There are many options and elements of qualitative research which may be included in this type of data collection. Additionally, this chapter examines qualitative data collection through focus groups while other institutions may find interviews or other methods of collection more appropriate for their university. The key point to remember is that qualitative data is one piece of a large assessment process. Qualitative data may help clarify and explain gaps in quantitative data or further elaborate reasons behind trends seen in quantitative data. But both types of data collection should be used by institutions in order to comprehensively assess the campus climate on sexual violence and ultimately create a plan to address the issues raised by such an assessment.

REFERENCES


Doody, O., Slevin, E., & Taggart, L. (2013b). Preparing for and conducting focus groups in nursing research: part 2, 22(3), 170-173.


