

# ANALYSIS

## Systematic Analysis Process

by Richard A. Krueger

### 1. **Start while still in the group**

- Listen for inconsistent comments and probe for understanding
- Listen for vague or cryptic comments and probe for understanding
- Consider asking each participant a final preference question
- Offer a summary of key questions and seek confirmation

### 2. **Immediately after the focus group**

- Draw a diagram of seating arrangement
- Spot check tape recording to ensure proper operation
- Conduct moderator and assistant moderator debriefing
- Note themes, hunches, interpretations, and ideas
- Compare and contrast this focus group to other groups
- Label and file field notes, tapes and other materials

### 3. **Soon after the focus group--within hours analyze individual focus group.**

- Make back-up copy of tapes and send tape to transcriptionist for computer entry if transcript is wanted
- Analyst listens to tape, reviews field notes and reads transcript if available
- Prepare report of the individual focus group in a question-by-question format with amplifying quotes
- Share report for verification with other researchers who were present at the focus group

### 4. **Later--within days analyze the series of focus groups**

- Compare and contrast results by categories of individual focus groups
- Look for emerging themes by question and then overall
- Construct typologies or diagram the analysis
- Describe findings and use quotes to illustrate

### 5. **Finally, prepare the report**

- Consider narrative style versus bulleted style
  - Use a few quotes to illustrate
  - Sequence could be question by question or by theme
  - Share report for verification with other researchers
  - Revise and finalize report
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## **Focus Group Analysis Tips**

**When analyzing focus group data consider...**

### **WORDS**

Think about both the actual words used by the participants and the meanings of those words. A variety of words and phrases will be used and the analyst will need to determine the degree of similarity between these responses.

### **CONTEXT**

Participant responses were triggered by a stimulus--a question asked by the moderator or a comment from another participant. Examine the context by finding the triggering stimulus and then interpret the comment in light of that environment. The response is interpreted in light of the preceding discussion and also by the tone and intensity of the oral comment.

### **INTERNAL CONSISTENCY**

Participants in focus groups change and sometimes even reverse their positions after interaction with others. When there is a shift in opinion, the researcher typically traces the flow of the conversation to determine clues that might explain the change.

### **FREQUENCY OR EXTENSIVENESS**

Some topics are discussed more by participants (extensiveness) and also some comments are made more often (frequency) than others. These topics could be more important or of special interest to participants. Also, consider what wasn't said or received limited attention. Did you expect but not hear certain comments?

### **INTENSITY**

Occasionally participants talk about a topic with a special intensity or depth of feeling. Sometimes the participants will use words that connote intensity or tell you directly about their strength of feeling. Intensity may be difficult to spot with transcripts alone because intensity is also communicated by the voice tone, speed, and emphasis on certain words. Individuals will differ on how they display strength of feeling and for some it will be a speed or excitement in the voice whereas others will speak slowly and deliberately.

### **SPECIFICITY**

Responses that are specific and based on experiences should be given more weight than responses that are vague and impersonal. To what degree can the respondent provide details when asked a follow up probe? Greater attention is often placed on responses that are in the first person as opposed to hypothetical third person answers.

### **FINDING BIG IDEAS**

One of the traps of analysis is not seeing the big ideas. Step back from the discussions by allowing an extra day for big ideas to percolate. For example, after finishing the analysis the researcher might set the report aside for a brief period and then jot down the three or four of the most important findings. Assistant moderators or others skilled in qualitative analysis might review the process and verify the big ideas.

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### Analysis Choices

<b>ANALYSIS TYPE</b>	<b>Memory based analysis</b>	<b>Note based analysis</b>	<b>Tape based analysis</b>	<b>Transcript based analysis</b>
<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	Moderator analyzes based on memory and past experiences and gives oral debriefing to client	Moderator prepares a brief written description based on summary comments, field notes and selective review of tapes	Moderator prepares written report based on an abridged transcript after listening to tapes plus field notes and moderator debriefing	Analyst prepares written report based on complete transcript. Some use of field notes and moderator debriefing
<b>ORAL OR WRITTEN REPORTS</b>	Usually oral report only	Usually oral and written report	Usually oral and written report	Usually oral and written report
<b>TIME REQUIRED PER GROUP</b>	Very fast Within minutes following the discussion	Fast Within 1-3 hours per group	Fast Within 4-6 hours per group	Slow About 2 days per group
<b>PERCEIVED LEVEL OF RIGOR</b>	Minimal	Moderate	Moderate to High	High
<b>RISK OF ERROR</b>	High	Moderate- depending on quality of field notes	Low	Low

## **The Old Fashioned Analysis Strategy: Long Tables, Scissors and Colored Marking Pens**

### **Equipment needed:**

Two copies of all transcripts

Scissors

Tape

Lots of room with long tables and possibly chart stands

Large sheets of paper (flip charts, newsprint paper, etc.)

Colored marking pens

Stick-on notes

1. **Prepare your transcripts for analysis.** You will save time and agony later if you are careful in preparing your transcripts. Be sure they follow a consistent style. For example, single spaced comments and double spaced between speakers. The comments of the moderator should be easily identifiable by bolding, caps, or underlining.
2. **Make two copies of each transcript.** One will be used to cut up and the other one stays intact for later reference.  

**TIP:** Consider printing transcripts on different colors of paper and color coding by audience type, category, etc. For example, teenagers are on blue paper and parents on green paper. Or use colored marking pens, highlight pens, or stick on notes to identify quotes that are cut out.
3. **Arrange transcripts in an order.** It could be in the sequence in which the groups were conducted, but more likely it will be by categories of participants or by some demographic screening characteristics of participants (users, non-users and employees, or teens, young adults and older adults, etc.). This arrangement helps you be alert to changes that may be occurring from one group to another.
4. **Read all transcripts at one sitting.** This quick reading is just to remind you of the whole scope and to refresh your memory of where information is located, what information is missing, and what information occurs in abundance.
5. **Prepare large sheets of paper.** Use a large sheet of paper for each question (sometimes several questions are integrated together into a theme). Place the large sheets on chart stands, on a long table or even on the floor. Identify the question or theme at the top of the sheet. If you have several categories of groups you might draw lines to divide the paper into sections and then group comments within these sections. For example, on one part of the page you might place comments from teen focus groups, in another place there will be comments from parent focus groups, and in a third place there will be comments from teacher focus groups.
6. **Cut and tape.** Read responses to the same question from all focus groups. Cut out relevant quotes and tape them to the appropriate place on the large sheet of paper. Look for quotes that are descriptive and capture the essence of the conversation. Sometimes there will be several different points of view and you can cluster the quotes around these points of view. The quality and relevance of quotes will vary. In some groups you might

find that you can use almost all quotes, but in other groups there will be few useable quotes. Set the unused quotes aside for later consideration. Also remember that some comments are better placed in other sections, such as when an individual gets "off topic" and responds to a different question.

**TIP:** Develop a strategy for documenting the source of the quote. Later you may want to go back and examine the context of a particular discussion and this source information will be vital. You could use colored markers, stick-on notes, or a coding letter or number to represent the source of the comments. For example, you might use different colors of highlighter marking pens and use a specific color for each category of respondents. Draw a vertical line from top to bottom of each page of the transcript. Then when you cut up this transcript that color will be present as a marker for the source. Or, you use a code number for each group and place that code number at the end of every quote in the transcript.

7. **Write a statement about the question.** Look over the quotes and prepare an overview integrating paragraph that describes responses to that question. A number of possibilities may occur. For example, you might be able to compare and contrast differing categories, you might have a major theme and a minor theme, you might discuss the variability of the comments, or even the passion or intensity of the comments. Following the overview paragraph you may need several additional paragraphs describing sub-sets of views or to elaborate on selected topics. When you are finished, to on to the next question.
8. **Continue until all transcripts are reviewed.** Some analysts like to prepare the descriptive summary immediate after the quotes for a question are placed on the large sheet of paper, but other analysts like to wait until all sheets are filled before writing. The benefit of delay is that it allows you to rearrange quotes to places where they really belong.
9. **Take a break.** Get away from the process for awhile. Refocus on the big picture. Think about what prompted the study. It's easy to get sidetracked into areas of minor importance. Be open to alternative views. Be skeptical. Look over the pile of unused quotes. Think big picture. Invite a research colleague to look over your work and offer feedback.
10. **Prepare the report.**

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[http://www.tc.umn.edu/~rkrueger/focus\\_analysis.html?file=%2F2%2Fmodules%2Fmodule19%2Eswf](http://www.tc.umn.edu/~rkrueger/focus_analysis.html?file=%2F2%2Fmodules%2Fmodule19%2Eswf)

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