

Beyond the Survey: Getting to know your target population using qualitative data

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Agenda

- Introduction and overview
- Qualitative data and key informant interviews
 - Justin Hunt, University of Michigan
 - Healthy Minds Qualitative Study of College Counseling Centers
- Overview of focus groups
 - Julie Halverson, SPRC
 - Barbara Pearson, Kansas State University
- Discussion and wrap-up

ACHA-NCHA

Q. 40E: In the last 12 months 36.2% of students reported they felt so depressed it was difficult to function.

- What does this information tell us?

- What else do you want to know about this?

Why Focus Groups?

- Gather information
 - Explore knowledge, attitudes, perceptions, beliefs
 - Form questions for quantitative research
 - Spontaneous exchange that you don't get w/survey
 - Inform strategy
 - Communication planning
 - Implementing interventions
 - Learn about hard to reach populations
 - What services are they likely to access?
 - What are their perceptions of mental health? The counseling center?
- Evaluation
 - Gatekeeper training programs
 - Are they effective? To what extent? For which populations?
 - Communication/Marketing
 - Are messages being interpreted as intended?
 - How is the campaign being received?

Focus Groups: How To

- **Goals of the study**
 - What do you want to know? What is your research question?
- **Develop a moderator's guide**
 - Develop open-ended questions, limited number of topics to guide conversation
 - Ground rules
 - What participants can expect
 - Approximately 90 minutes
- **Sample**
 - Typically 8-10 people
 - Sample will depend upon goal of the study
 - Saturation
- **Capturing information**
 - A/V recording
 - Note taking

Benefits/Challenges

• Benefits

- Gather information about:
 - Knowledge, attitude, beliefs
 - Barriers and facilitators to behavior
 - Insight into populations not represented in quantitative data samples
- Test messages/marketing materials
- Generate hypotheses and survey questions, investigate meaning of survey results

• Challenges

- Small sample
 - Generalizing results
 - Recruiting
- Facilitator bias
- IRB approval
- Time consuming data analysis

ACHA-NCHA

Q. 40E: In the last 12 months 36.2% of students reported they felt so depressed it was difficult to function.

- What else do you want to know about this?
- What qualitative research method would you use to learn more about the target population(s)?
- What groups or departments on campus would you target?

Questions to consider

- What are the hard to reach populations on your campus?
 - How could qualitative research help you to learn more about them?
- What do you know about the attitudes and beliefs about suicide and mental health on your campus? Barriers and facilitators to help-seeking?
- How could qualitative data be incorporated into program evaluation?

References

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