

Appendix B. Focus Group Moderator Guide

Introduction

10 Minutes

Good afternoon! My name is _____. Thank you for joining us today!

Before we get started, I wanted to remind you of a few things about our research study and this focus group. You will find in front of you the information and consent document that we emailed to you when we wrote to you about the focus group. Please feel free to ask questions as I go through these reminders about the information included on the sheet we emailed to you.

1. As you recall, we're interested in talking with you about your experiences with social groups during high school.
2. This discussion will last approximately 90 minutes.
3. We are going to spend our time today first sharing what general types of social groups existed in your high school.
4. We will audio record the conversation so that we can accurately capture the full discussion.
5. A professional transcription firm will later transcribe the audio recording to words. Once we confirm the transcript is correct, we will destroy the audio file.
6. We ask you not to use personal names –
7. We also ask that you all make up a name to use for yourself during the focus group today – you can write it on the name tag in front of you – and we'll use those names today if we need to refer to each other.
8. Respect one another's privacy and confidentiality after the focus groups
9. We do not later tell others who was at this focus group or repeat what was said.
10. Remember, though, that we cannot control whether others may do this, and so as you share information please remember that it's possible that other participants in the group may accidentally disclose what was said.
11. Speak freely, use terms/names/slang you would use in everyday conversation. Might be uncomfortable
12. At the end of the conversation, you will each receive [incentive] as a token of appreciation for your time.
13. Remember that your participation is voluntary, and you can decide not to participate in a portion of the focus group or to leave the focus group at any time without negatively affecting your current or future relationship with us or with [university].
14. Does anyone have any questions?

Let's get started and introduce ourselves:

- Name
- Where you're from
- Size of school
- Favorite activity

Please don't share with us the name of your high school so we can avoid identifying people and places as much as possible. I'll start....

[Turn on audio recorder after introductions]

Ok, now that we have introduced ourselves, I am going to turn on the audio recorder. Remember – we want to not say any specific names of high schools or classmates while we are recording.

Idea Generation: Groups

7 minutes

We want to talk about the social groups in high school: students who liked similar sorts of things or hung out together.

- We don't want to talk about specific people or specific names of the groups.
- From a research perspective, we are interested in general kinds of social groups,
- You might think about social groups that you see in pop culture, like on Glee, Mean Girls, or Big Bang Theory.
- Researchers have called these “crowds” or “cliques.”
- *A “crowd” or “clique” is a group of students that you would describe by a label, they may act similar, do the same sorts of things, even if they don't always spend a lot of time together.*
- Several decades ago researchers talked to high school students about the groups in their schools, and they found that most schools had about 8 to 15 groups.
- Some groups were unique to each school, but many were similar across schools, even if the groups were named somewhat differently.

A lot has changed in society since this research was originally conducted, and we are interested in learning from you what kinds of social groups existed in your high school.

- This process may feel like pigeonholing or stereotyping
- We are interested in identifying the features that people have in their mind when they think about these groups.
- Doing so will help us understand those mental pictures, which can help us understand how they might affect students' daily lives, including when they do not actually fit that stereotype.
- In order to understand those consequences, we have to understand the groups and what characteristics people associate with the groups.

Does that make sense? Anyone have questions? Can anyone name a group as an example?

Hand out Post-its

- Write down as many groups as you can remember from your high school.
- Each have a stack of post-its in front of you.
- Please write the names of social groups from your high school on these post-its notes.
- Please write only one name per post-it.
- Remember, try to use as general a name as you can – as an example from pop culture, for instance, you could say Glee Club rather than William McKinley High School Glee Club.
- Use as many post-its as you need
- Any questions? We'll take about 3 – 5 minutes.

[About 3 minutes in, prompt to see who needs more time. If it looks like people have stopped writing, ask if anyone needs more time. Begin to collect from those who are finished]

[Once you have collected all the post-its]

Now our goal is to come up with common groups.

- There may be some groups that everyone has.
- There may be some groups that only one person has.
- That is all ok – different groups are at every high school.
- But, we would like to try to put together groups that are similar, even if they are called something different.

If you think of any new groups as we go, write them down on a post – it and we’ll come back to those at the end.

I’m going to read the post-its out loud and put them on the white board. Help me figure out whether the new group is the same or similar to another group already on the board.

[Moderator begins reading names on the post-its. Moderator Asks: Is this similar to any of the other groups? Is this the same name for a group we have up here? Depending on the group size and the set up of the room, allow students to move closer to the board so they can see the groups. We want to avoid getting too sidetracked debating names and definitions. Some labels can be put “in between” groups or “parked” if debate begins. We also want to encourage general names, rather than specific names of groups, so move the most general names to the top of each category as you go.]

[Once all of the post-its have been read]

Start with where the most post - its

- Our goal come up with 5 or 6 of the most common groups.
- If we need to combine some groups or split some up as we go that’s ok.
- We also may not completely agree, but we will get as close as possible so that we can then move on to talking about some characteristics of 5 or 6 groups.
- Feel free to use the pens and post-its to write down an idea if you think you might forget before you have a chance to speak.

[Go through the groups starting with those that already have the most post-its. Note if there are disagreements, but remind students we don’t have to all agree completely, and can keep moving forward.]

Did anyone come up with any other ideas that they haven’t had a chance to share yet?

Ok, now that we’ve identified [5/6] groups, let’s talk in a little more about each of them.

Group Descriptives

30 minutes

Now that we've identified [5/6] common groups, let's go through each group and describe it. We want to think about the typical characteristics of students in this group. What do they look like and what do they like to do?

This process will feel like pigeonholing or stereotyping, but that is because we are interested in identifying the features that people have in their mind when they think about these groups. Doing so will help us understand those mental pictures, which can help us understand how they might affect students' daily lives, including when they do not actually fit that stereotype. In order to understand those consequences, we first have to understand the groups and what characteristics people associate with the groups.

Ok let's start with...[pick the group with the most post-its]

- What kinds of people are in this group?
- What do they look like?
 - What kinds of clothes do they wear?
 - What race, gender income are they?
 - How good looking are they?
- What kinds of activities are they involved in?
- What are their grades like?
- Where do they hang out after school?
- What do they do on weekends?
- How healthy are they?
- Did they hang out with other groups?
 - Which ones?
- How do they differ from other groups?
- [Repeat these questions for each group until you've gone through all the [5/6] groups]
- [Once all the groups have been characterized, ask the following overarching questions about the groups]
- Who did you like the best?
- Who did most teachers like the best?
- Who did you stay away from?
- Who was treated unfairly?
- Who got a free pass?
 - How so?
- Which groups hung out together?
- Was it easy to move between some groups, but others were more isolated or harder to join? Which ones?
- Social Hierarchy?
- Social media?

Closing

Great! That is all the questions I have for you. Please take a minute to think about anything else you'd like to share about social groups in your high school and write it on the note card in front of you.

Thank you very much for sharing your time, effort and ideas today. Your responses have been extremely valuable. I'm going to walk around and hand you each the [incentive].

If you have any questions about your participation in this study, remember that the information sheet I gave you has contact information for the principal investigator of the study. Please don't hesitate to reach out. Have a wonderful day and thank you!

[We want to collect anything that student wrote on the notepads, both at the end and during groups. We also want to take pictures of the post its/names of groups and the board. We want to clean up the rooms, and leave them as we found them.]