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Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



Online Training - Research Methods

FOCUS GROUP

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WP5



01

Power Point
Presentations made
available online from
15 June 2017

02

Multiple choice
exercises (assessment
work) from 30 June
2017

03

Support provided for
further explanation
through skype, blog,
email etc. from 15th
June to 30th July 2017

04

Material archived as
Massive open online
courses (MOOCs) on
ASCENT Virtual
Learning Environment
(VLE) to follow-up
from 30th July onwards

Mode of the training



Learning Outcomes

Apply

Apply the principles described for data collection and analysis

Evaluate

Examine methodological implications of adopted technique of data collection





Focus Groups



Qualitative research

- ▶ Designed to reveal behaviour and perceptions
- ▶ Data based on observation
- ▶ Words, images, patterns etc. for data
- ▶ Inductive in nature
- ▶ Used for theory building (grounded theory)
- ▶ Descriptive results



Factors influencing selection of participants

Sampling type

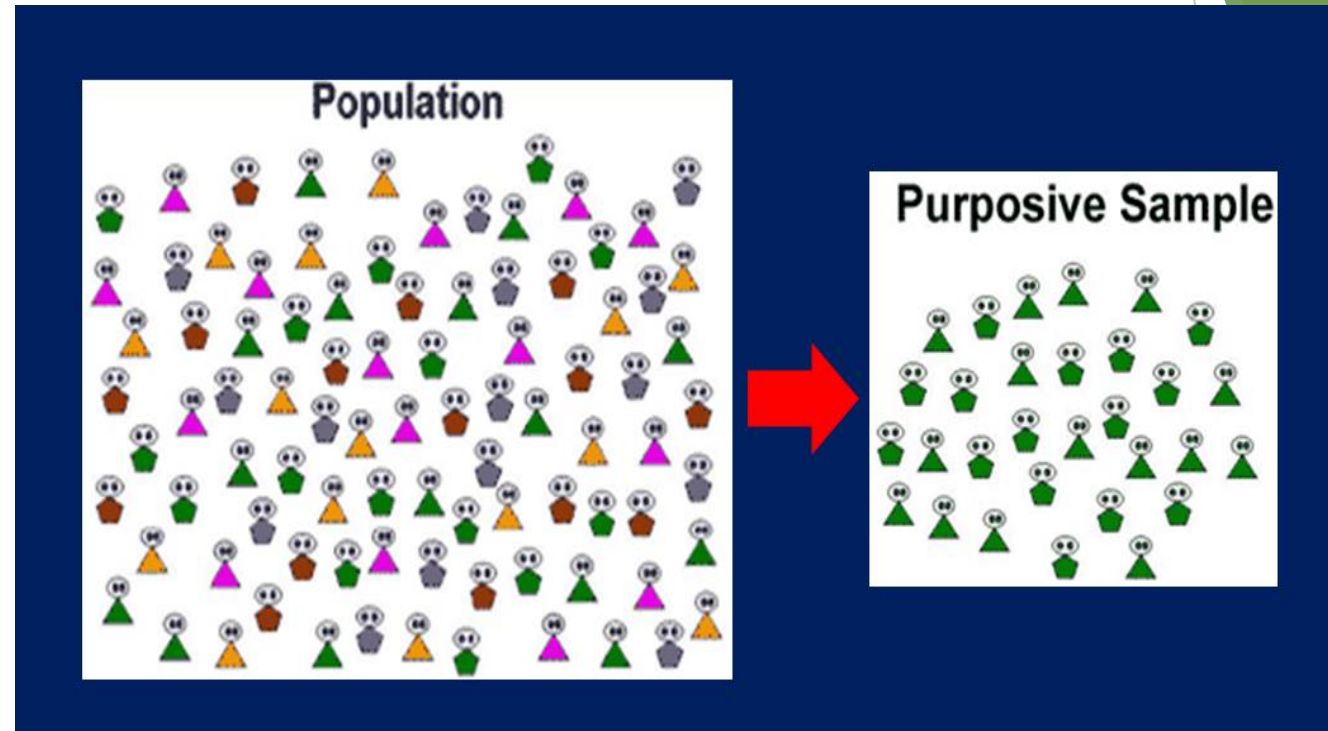
- Purposive

Sampling size

- Sufficient



- ▶ Selection of participants depend on:
 - ▶ research questions,
 - ▶ theoretical perspectives, and
 - ▶ evidence informing the study

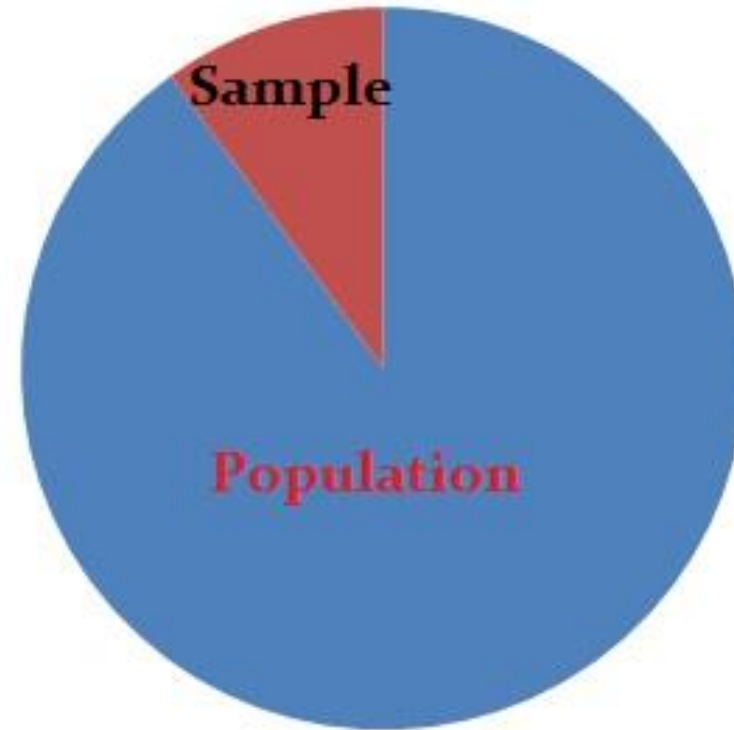


Purposive Sampling



Sample size

- ▶ Not generally predetermined
- ▶ Depends upon the number required to inform fully all important elements of the phenomenon being studied
- ▶ The sample size is sufficient when additional interviews or focus groups do not result in identification of new concepts, an end point called **data saturation**.



Data collection methods for qualitative research



Personal interview



Focus group



Observations



Document review



“ *a group interview - centred on a specific topic ('focus') and facilitated and co-ordinated by a moderator or facilitator - which seeks to generate primarily qualitative data, by capitalising on the interaction that occurs within the group setting* ”

Sim and Snell (1996, pp 189)

Definition of the focus group



Purpose of focus group

To collect data from a number of people or to encourage participants to exchange views

To allow simultaneously collecting data from a number of participants

To facilitate communication between the group participants, experiences, points of views

To explore participants' knowledge and experiences of how they feel or think about the subject matter under discussion



Generates good quality of data

Participants get more motivated than other modes of interviews

Has potential of being inclusive of accommodating variety of social groups' representatives

Presents participants a common platform for discussion

Strengths of focus group



- ▶ Turning out as mere meeting or a conversation and does not allow comparable discourse
- ▶ May not allow opportunities for spontaneous discussion
- ▶ Employed where time and cost of interviewing are considered as issues
- ▶ Generous amount of time is spent in recruiting participants and analysing the complex data it generates

Weakness of focus group



Different Modes of Focus group

Telephone

Internet

Face to
face



Characteristics of focus groups

- ▶ Recommended size of the sample group is 8-12 participants
- ▶ Smaller group of 4-6 participants could also be considered
- ▶ Coordinated by a moderator or facilitator
- ▶ Members of the focus group have something in common that is important to the research investigation
- ▶ Follow up discussions can be conducted with the same group or diverse groups
- ▶ Can be used for primary data-collection method that would help the development of more structured survey instrument



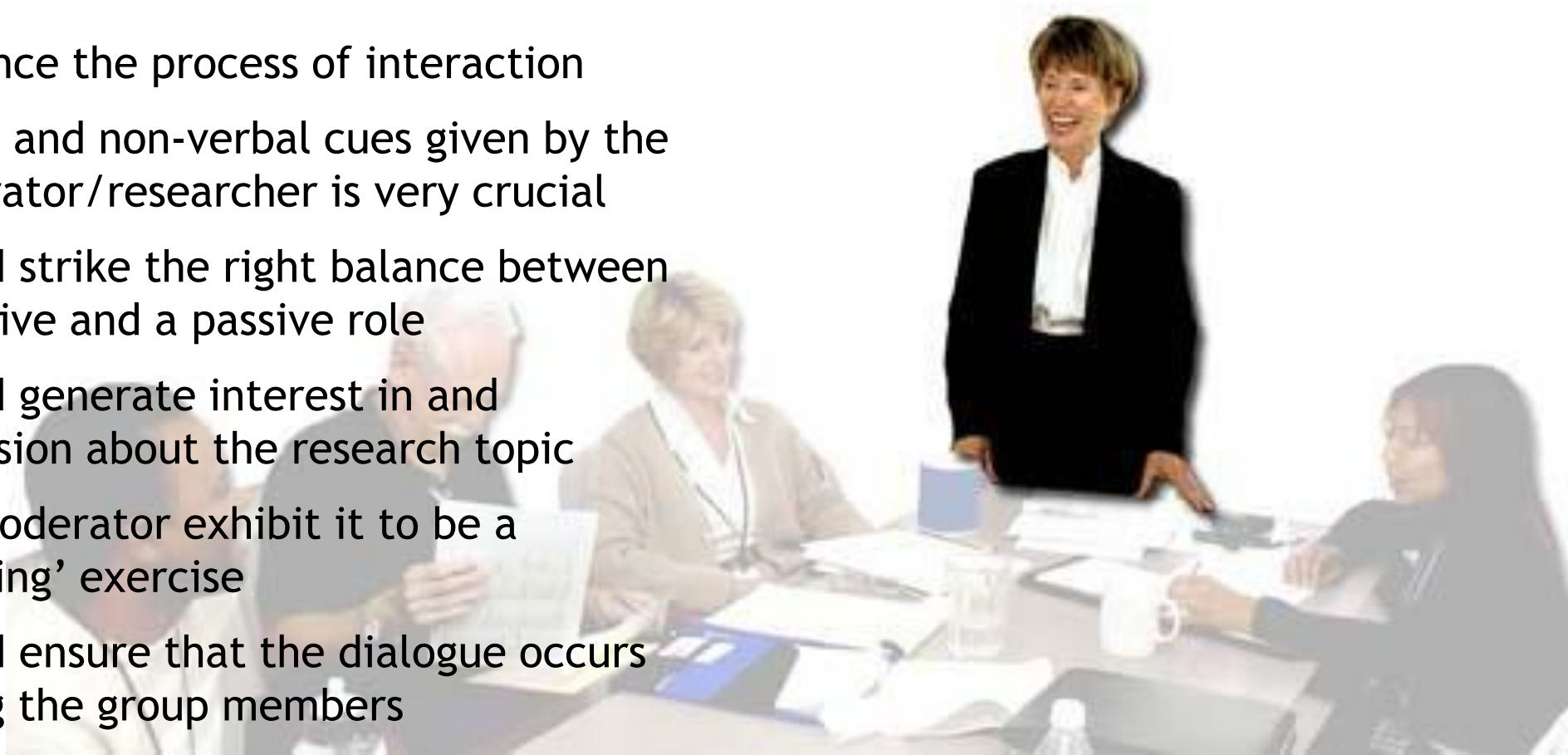
Challenges faced in focus group

- ▶ Data need to be collected not only on what participants say, but also on how they interact with one another
- ▶ Quotations need to be attributed accurately to individual group members
- ▶ The process of data collection should not interfere with or detract from the coordination of the group
- ▶ The method of recording data should not in self have reactive effects upon the group participants.



The role of the moderator - **Very important**

- ▶ Influence the process of interaction
- ▶ Verbal and non-verbal cues given by the moderator/researcher is very crucial
- ▶ Should strike the right balance between an active and a passive role
- ▶ Should generate interest in and discussion about the research topic
- ▶ The moderator exhibit it to be a 'learning' exercise
- ▶ Should ensure that the dialogue occurs among the group members



- ▶ Economical way of tapping the views of a number of people
- ▶ Reveals ‘dynamic’ information in contrast to ‘static’ information gained through questionnaire studies
- ▶ Encourage a greater degree of spontaneity
- ▶ Provides a ‘safe’ forum for the expression of views
- ▶ Participants experience feeling of being common within the group

Advantages of the focus group





Recording data

Data can be recorded using

- ▶ Written notes
- ▶ Tape-recorders
- ▶ Videos



Limitations of qualitative research



Can be

- ▶ Time consuming and expensive
- ▶ Inefficient, biased, unpredictable
- ▶ Hard to pre-test
- ▶ Difficult to standardise and replicate
- ▶ Difficult to analyse



References

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- ▶ Stewart, D. and Shamdasani, P. (1990), *Focus Groups: Theory and Practice*. Sage, Newbury Park, California.

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Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



The ASCENT project consortium receives financial assistance from the European Union. The European Commission support for the project and its associated activities and outputs does not constitute an endorsement of the contents which reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein

