RESEARCH METHODS

Stewart, David W. and Shamdasani, Prem N. (1990) *Focus Groups: Theory and Practice*, from Applied Social Research Methods Series, Vol. 20, Newbury Park, CA: SAGE Publications.

Morgan, David L. (1997) *Focus Groups as Qualitative Research*, from Qualitative Research Methods Series, Vol. 16-2nd ed., Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Langer, Judith (2001) *The Mirrored Window: Focus Groups from a Moderator's Point of View,* Ithaca, NY: Paramount Market Publishing, Inc.

Edmunds, H. (1999) The Focus Group Research Handbook, Chicago, IL: NTC Business Books.

May, R. and Patillo-McCoy (2000) "Do You See What I See? Examining a Collaborative Ethnography, *Qualitative Inquiry*, Vol. 6, Issue 1, pp. 65-87.

Smith, D. (1989) "Feminism and Sociological Theory," in Ruth Wallace (ed.) *Sociological Theory: Methods of Writing Patriarchy*, Sage.

Hodson, R. (1996) "Dignity in the Workplace under Participative Management: Alienation and Freedom Revisited, *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 61, October, pp. 719-738.

Cancian, F. (1989) "Truth and Goodness: Does the Sociology of Inequality Promote Social Betterment," *Sociological Perspectives*, Vol. 38, No. 3, pp. 339-356.

Maxwell, J. (1996) *Qualitative Research Design: An Interpretive Approach*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Morgan, D. "Focus Groups: Forthcoming in the Annual Review of Sociology,

Dey, I. *Grounding Grounded Theory*, *Guidelines for Qualitative Inquiry*, Academic Press.

Schuman H., and Presser, S. *Questions and Answers in Attitude Surveys: Experiments on Question form, Wording, and Context*, New York: Academic Press.

Stringer, E. (1999) *Action Research*, 2nd edn., Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

RESEARCH METHODS

Stewart, David W. and Shamdasani, Prem N. (1990) *Focus Groups: Theory and Practice*, from Applied Social Research Methods Series, Vol. 20, Newbury Park, CA: SAGE Publications.

- "The term group interviewing will be limited to those situations where the assembled group is small enough to permit genuine discussion among all its members." Smith, G. H. (1954:59) *Motivation Research in Advertising and Marketing*, New York: McGraw-Hill. 10
- The contemporary focus group interview generally involved 8 to 12 individuals who discuss a particular topic under the direction of a moderator who promotes interaction and assures that the discussion remains on the topic of interest. Experience has shown that smaller groups may be dominated by one or two members, while larger groups are difficult to manage and inhibit participation by all members of the group. A typical focus group session will last from one and a half to two and a half hours. Although they can be conducted in a variety of sites ranging from homes offices (and, as well will discuss in Chapter 3, even by conference telephone), it is most common for focus group sessions to be held in facilities designed especially for focus group interviewing. Such facilities provide one-way mirrors and viewing rooms where observers unobtrusively may observe the interview in progress. 10
- Focus group facilities also may include equipment for audio or video taping of the interview and perhaps even a small transmitter for the moderator to wear (a "bug in the ear") so that observers may have input into the interviews. Such facilities tend to be situated in locations that are either easy to get to – such as just off a major commuter traffic artery – or in places like shopping malls where people naturally tend to gather. 10
- The moderator is the key to assuring that a group discussion goes smoothly. The focus group moderator generally is well trained in group dynamics and interview skills. Depending on the intent of the research the moderator may be more or less directive with respect to the discussion, and often is quite nondirective – letting the discussion flow naturally as long as it remains on the topic of interest. Indeed, one of the strengths of focus group research is that it may be adapted to provide the most desirable level of focus and structure. 10-11
- The interviewer provides the agenda or structure for the discussion by virtue of his or her role in the group. When a moderator suggests a new topic for discussion by asking a new question, the group has a tendency to comply. A group discussion might never cover particular topics or issues unless the moderator intervenes. This raises the question of the most appropriate amount of structure for a given group. There is, of course, no best answer to this question because the amount of structure and the directiveness of the moderator must be determined by the broader research agenda that gave rise to the focus group: the types of information sought, the specificity of the information required, and the way the information will be used. 11
- There is also a balance that must be struck between what is important to members of the group and what is important to the researchers. Less structured groups will tend to pursue those issues and topics of greater importance, relevance, and interest to the group

members themselves. This is perfectly appropriate if the objective of the researcher is to learn about those things that are most important to the group. Often, however, the researcher has rather specific information needs; discussion of issues relevant to these needs may only occur when the moderator takes a more directive and structured approach. It is important to remember that when this occurs, participants are discussing what is important to the researcher, and not necessarily what they consider significant. 11

- Focus groups provide a number of advantages relative to other types of research:
  1. Focus groups provide data from a group of people much more quickly and at less cost than would be the case if each individual were interviewed separately. They also can be assembled on much shorter notice than would be required for a more systematic, and larger survey.
  2. Focus groups allow the researcher to interact directly with respondents. This provides opportunities for the clarification of responses, for follow-up questions, and for the probing of responses. Respondents can qualify responses or give contingent answers to questions. In addition, it is possible for the researcher to observe nonverbal responses such as gestures, smiles, frowns, and so forth, which may carry information that supplements (and, on occasion, even contradicts) the verbal response.
  3. The open response format of a focus group provides an opportunity to obtain large and rich amounts of data in the respondents' own words. The researcher can obtain deeper levels of meaning, make important connections, and identify subtle nuances in expression and meaning.
  4. Focus groups allow respondents to react to and build upon the responses of other group members. This synergistic effect of the group setting may result in the production of data or ideas that might not have been uncovered in individual interviews.
  5. Focus groups are very flexible. They can be used to examine a wide range of topics with a variety of individuals and in a variety of settings.
  6. Focus groups may be one of the few research tools available for obtaining data form children or from individuals who are not particularly literate.
  7. The results of a focus group are easy to understand. Researchers and decision makers can readily understand the verbal responses of most respondents. This is not always the case with more sophisticated survey research that employs complex statistical analyses. 16

  - The interaction of respondents with one another and with the researcher has two undesirable effects. First, the responses from members of the group are not independent of one another, which restricts the generalizability of results. Second, the results obtained in a focus group may be biased by a very dominant or opinionated member. More reserved group members may be hesitant to talk. 17
  - The moderator may bias results by knowingly or unknowingly providing cues about what types of responses and answers are desirable. 17
  - Focus groups are conducted to obtain specific types of information from clearly identified sets of individuals. This means that individuals who are invited to participate in a focus group must be able and willing to provide the desired information and must be representative of the population of interest. Thus, the

selection and recruitment of participants for a focus group is a critical task. So too is the design of the interview guide, because it establishes the agenda for the group discussion and provides a structure within which participants may interact and articulate their thoughts and feelings. A focus group is not just a haphazard discussion among people who happen to be available; it is a well planned research endeavor that requires the same care and attention associated with any other type of scientific research. 51`

- Focus groups are not designed to be opportunities for a group of people to discuss whatever comes to mind; they are designed with a purpose in mind. Too often, focus groups are used as a substitute for thinking about a topic, with the result being that very little useful information is obtained from the group. There is a phenomenon and not knowing what you want to learn. 52
- "The best facilitator has unobtrusive chameleon-like qualities; gently draws consumers into the process; deftly encourages them to interact with one another for optimum synergy; lets the intercourse flow naturally with a minimum of intervention; listens openly and deeply; uses silence well; plays back consumer statements in a distilling way which brings out more refined thoughts or explanations; and remains completely nonauthoritarian and nonjudgemental. Karger, T. (1987, August 28) "Focus Groups are for Focusing, and for Little Else," *Marketing News*, pp. 52-55. 69
- Common uses of focus groups include obtaining general background information about a topic, generating research hypotheses, stimulating new ideas and creativity, generating impressions of products or programs, diagnosing potential problems, facilitating the interpretation of previously obtained quantitative results, and obtaining new insights and knowledge about phenomena of interest. Focus groups settings range from well-equipped research laboratories to the casual, more relaxed surroundings of residences. 122
- Insofar as science is a cumulative endeavor, and focus group interviewing is a scientific method, the answers to all of these questions should be yes. Although it is undoubtedly true that there is a great deal of art in the actual practice of focus group research, this is true of the practice of all scientific methods. That there is a certain art to conducting focus groups, or designing good experiments, does not make these methods less scientific. The ultimate test of a method as a tool of science is its ability to produce useful knowledge. By this test one would have to consider focus group interviewing a well-established and rigorous tool of science. One would also have to answer "yes" to each of the questions posed above, but in most cases the answer would have to be qualified because focus group interviewing has been, and remains, one of the most widely abused of scientific tools. 122-123
- Ultimately, the true test of the validity of a research technique is determined by the frequency with which it yields useful, interesting, and actionable results. The persistence of the focus group interview for almost 50 years, its rapid growth as a tool for social science research, and the breadth of fields and applications to which it has been applied suggest that it has met this standard of validity. 143

Morgan, David L. (1997) *Focus Groups as Qualitative Research*, from Qualitative Research Methods Series, Vol. 16-2nd ed., Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

- As a form of qualitative research, focus groups are basically group interviews, although not in the sense of an alternation between a researcher's questions and the research participants' responses. Instead, the reliance is on interaction within the group, based on topics that are supplied by the researcher who typically takes the role of a moderator. The hallmark of focus groups is their explicit use of group interaction to produce data and insights that would be less accessible without the interaction found in a group. 2
- Only a decade ago, focus groups were almost unknown to social scientists. Now, a review of on-line databases (Morgan, 1996) indicates that research using focus groups is appearing in academic journals at the rate of more than 100 articles per year. Their use in applied research outside academic settings is even more extensive. This rapid growth is partly due to social scientists' ability to borrow from an established set of practices in marketing research, in which focus groups have been the dominant form of qualitative data collection (e.g. Goldman & MacDonald, 1987; Greenbaum, 1993; Hayes & Tatham, 1989). 2
- In the self-contained uses, focus groups serve as the primary means of collecting qualitative data, just as participant observation or individual interviewing can serve as a primary means of gathering data. Using focus groups in this manner requires a careful matching of the goals of the research with the data that the focus groups can produce to meet these goals. Accordingly, the use of focus groups as a self-contained method often leads to an emphasis on research design. 3
- Focus groups can thus serve a number of different purposes. Used in a self-contained fashion, they can be the basis for a complete study. Used with other methods, they can either supplement another primary method or combine with other qualitative methods in a true partnership. This flexible range of uses for focus groups in the social sciences contrasts strongly with marketing applications in which focus groups have historically served as a preliminary step to be followed by quantitative research (McQuarrie, 1996).
- Focus groups are not really new. Within the social sciences, Bogardus's (1926) description of group interviews is among the earliest published work. Group interviews also played a notable part in applied social research programs during World War II, including efforts to examine the persuasiveness of propaganda efforts and the effectiveness of training materials for the troops (Merton & Kendall, 1946), as well as studies on factors that affected the productivity of work groups (Thompson & Demerath, 1952). It was these wartime efforts that produced the first detailed discussions of group interviews, which evolved form a mimeographed manual to a recently reissued book (Merton, Fiske & Kendall, 1990).
- In the early 1980s, applied demographers (e.g., Folch-Lyon, de la Macorra, & Schearer, 1981) began to use focus groups as a way to understand the knowledge, attitudes, and practices that influenced the use of contraception. At about the same time, British communication researchers began using focus groups to examine how audience members interpreted media messages (Lunt & Livingstone, 1996). With the advent of the acquired immunodeficiency syndrome epidemic, researchers (e.g., Joseph et al., 1984)used focus groups as a first step to overcome their limited knowledge about the gay community.

Meanwhile, other health educators (e.g., Basch, 1987) were improving the effectiveness of intervention programs by holding group discussions with members of their target audience. 5

- …focus groups and individual interviews can be complementary techniques across a variety of different research designs. In particular, either of them can be used in either a preliminary or a follow-up capacity with the other. This illustrates the larger point that the goal of combining research methods is to strengthen the total research project regardless of which method is the primary means of data collection. 23
- The principal benefit that focus groups have to offer to a project based on participant observation is a concentrated insight into participants' thinking on a topic. This can be especially useful when the research is entering a field site that differs sharply from his or her prior experience. In this case, the focus groups provide an initial exposure to the typical experiences and perspectives of those the researcher is about to observe. Given the well-known problems of gaining access to and establishing rapport in a new field site, preliminary focus groups with participants drawn from similar locations, other than the research setting itself, can often be quite useful. 23-24
- Focus groups can also help in the selection of a site for participant observation. As with individual interviews, focus groups can be conducted with participants form each of several possible field settings to provide a basis for deciding among them. Comparing potential field settings to each other is especially useful in projects that utilize multiple field sites. Theoretical sampling is often an important element in selecting the comparisons that are built into a multisite case study (Yin, 1994), and preliminary focus groups at a variety of candidate sites can help determine which have the most potential for meaningful comparisons. 24
- Focus groups can also contribute to theoretical sampling in observational studies that use Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). In this approach, the researcher first completes a set of analyses at one site or with one population group and then searches for a theoretically motivated second sample that will provide the most informative comparison to what6 is already known. Focus groups would be a convenient source of insights into which kind of second sample would provide the most useful comparison. 24
- There are three basic ways that focus groups can contribute to the creation of survey items: (a) by capturing all the domains that need to be measured in the survey, (b) by determining the dimensions that make up each of these domains, and (c) by providing item wordings that effectively convey the researcher's intent to the survey respondent. 25
- In reality, the success of the project as a whole depends on a combination of thoughtfully defining the research goals, systematically deciding what questions need to be asked, carefully determining who will participate in the groups and how to recruit them, and thoroughly analyzing the data in addition to skillfully moderating the groups. 72
- Indeed, the discussion of "future directions" using focus groups highlighted the need for more methodological research. That group believed that doing research on focus groups would not only provide us with evidence for the value of current practices but also set a standard for testing new techniques. 73

- In our discussion of future directions, we also advocated getting a wider array of disciplines involved in doing focus groups. Our hope was to re-create the innovations that occurred when the first wave of social scientists who did focus groups questioned the wisdom that we received. By bringing in a new set of social science researchers from other disciplines, we would set the stage for questioning our own received wisdom. Fortunately, there is evidence that an increasing range of social science disciplines are using focus groups (Morgan, 1996); therefore, only time will tell if this does indeed broaden the range of practices. 73
- Ultimately, focus groups will be judged against one unavoidable criterion: Do they help us reach our research goals? At a minimum, any new method must offer researchers an increased sense that they can answer their existing research questions. New methods are especially appealing, however, when they also lead us to ask new or better questions. Thus, the appeal of focus groups as an addition to the existing range of qualitative techniques arises from their ability both to address existing research questions and to generate new ideas about how to do qualitative research. 74

Langer, Judith (2001) *The Mirrored Window: Focus Groups from a Moderator's Point of View,* Ithaca, NY: Paramount Market Publishing, Inc.

- "The purpose of focus groups is different from quantitative research. In focus groups, you want to show the product and get reactions, or have a theory and have it discussed, or have concepts fleshed out for the quantitative research in the customer's own words." Susan Walsh, The Hearst Corporation. 3

Edmunds, H. (1999) The Focus Group Research Handbook, Chicago, IL: NTC Business Books.

- The format of a focus group report varies by vendor styles and client performances. Ultimately, however, all such reports aim to incorporate the overall essence of all of the focus group discussions included in a given qualitative project. To accomplish this, the writer may use a variety of techniques. Means of looking at and evaluating the focus group results can include the following:
    - Grouping similar responses by quota group (for instance, mentions by region, age group, or company size)
    - Identifying comments that are frequently mentioned
    - Evaluating rankings or "votes" occurring over the course of the project
    - Discussing messages with opposing ideas indicated by body language 94
- To ensure accurate evaluation of focus group reports, keep min mind several rules of thumb:
    - Avoid quantifying results; remember this is a qualitative analysis.
    - It is important to provide quotations to support your evaluations.
    - Identify which thoughts were generated through a free-flowing discussion and which were actually aided responses.
    - When reporting, it is often necessary to split or condense participants' quotations to more quickly make your point. 94-5
- While the content of the reporting process is typically best left to the discretion (and

expertise) of the moderator, the "how" of the reporting process generally depends on the client's preferences. The final focus group project evaluation can consist of a number of building blocks, including these:
    - An executive summary report (primarily the key findings and recommendations)
    - A detailed report (generally containing detailed quotations and expanding on issues leading to the key findings)
    - Focus group transcripts (including the actual video and/or audiotapes)
    - A presentation of results (potentially including tape excerpts as well) 95-6
- The participants should…
    - have the right to refuse the invitation to attend a group without being harassed by recruiters who need to meet a quota.
    - be informed of all video- and audiotaping occurring during the groups, as well as advised that people are viewing the groups.
    - fell comfortable within the group setting. No participant should be forced to respond, expected to answer in a given manner, or humiliated for having different opinions.
    - be able to rely on the safety of the facility and its parking lot area.
    - receive an honest explanation about how the research results will be used.
    - not be put into a situation that is actually a sales presentation when he or she is expecting to attend a discussion group. (There is a difference!) 127

May, R. and Patillo-McCoy (2000) "Do You See What I See? Examining a Collaborative Ethnography, *Qualitative Inquiry*, Vol. 6, Issue 1, pp. 65-87.
--We found that collaborative ethnography increases the body of data that can be used to describe and understand the social world under observation. 66
--By collaborative ethnography, we mean those studies in which two or more ethnographers coordinate their fieldwork efforts to gather data from a single setting. 66
--In collaborative ethnographies, (a) important details from the field are supplemented, (b) inconsistencies in data are brought to the fore, © the influence of the ethnographers' social identities is recognized. 85

Smith, D. (1989) "Feminism and Sociological Theory," in Ruth Wallace (ed.) *Sociological Theory: Methods of Writing Patriarchy*, Sage.
--The opening of public discourse to multiple voices and perspectives calls into question the very notion of a single standpoint from which a final overriding version of the world can be written. 58

Hodson, R. (1996) "Dignity in the Workplace under Participative Management: Alienation and Freedom Revisited, *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 61, October, pp. 719-738.
--Craft organizations of work are those in which autonomous worker decisions about the details of production, based on the possession of craft skills, play a dominant role. 726
--the effects of worker participation on job satisfaction, pride, insider knowledge and effort bargain aspects of work are consistently positive ands significant. Some of the settings with high levels of worker participation are worker-owned companies. These settings in particular evidence high levels of pride and effort. 731

--The strong negative effect of direct supervision suggests the important of human and organizational factors over technical factors in determining levels of alienation and freedom. 734
--Participative organizations of production are associated with a positive turn in workers' experiences of work, reversing a long series of setbacks following the decline of craft production. 735
--workers work harder in participative organizations but also experience greater pride and job satisfaction and possess greater insider knowledge. 735
--These consequences of participative production, especially the increase in insider knowledge, may be potential sources of power that workers can use to bargain for greater freedom, self-actualization, and dignity in participative work settings. 735

Cancian, F. (1989) "Truth and Goodness: Does the Sociology of Inequality Promote Social Betterment," *Sociological Perspectives*, Vol. 38, No. 3, pp. 339-356.
--"Reducing Inequality"--This position advocates doing more research and teaching that is directly related to solving social problems and that is aimed at audiences involved in social change. 341
--Sociology that reduces inequality, I will argue, should investigate social problems and remedies and, at the same time, be reflexive about values and committed to high scientific standards. 341
--In the first issue of The American Journal of Sociology, published in 1895, editor Albion Small defined the four goals of sociology as: (1) building theory to identify the principles of social relations, (2) relating abstract sociology to everyday life and the interests of leading citizens, (3) promoting the general welfare, and (4) restraining premature public opinion. (Small, 1895) 343
--The Society for the Study of Social Problems and its Journal, *Social Problems*, were founded in the early 1950s to promote the study of social problems and provide "the knowledge for sound social action". Burgess 1953:2 345
--Structural realism holds that distinct classes emerge as a consequence of socially created arrangements that maintain economic, political, and social integrity. 346
--In sum, much of our practice of sociology continues to follow the pure science ideal--the belief that sociology contributes to social betterment by producing objective knowledge which is then applied by others to address social problems. 348
--participatory research, that is, community groups that often help determine the research agenda and sometimes participate in carrying out and disseminating the research. 350
--Activist teaching and research...is a model of sociology that reduces inequality, as long as it avoids the two pitfalls of reformist sociology: sloppy research methods and close-minded moralizing. 351

Maxwell, J. (1996) *Qualitative Research Design: An Interpretive Approach*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
--In a qualitative study, "research design should be a reflexive process operating through every stage of a project" (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983 p28).
--The activities of collecting and analyzing data, developing and modifying theory, elaborating or refocusing the research questions, and identifying and eliminating validity threats are usually going on more or less simultaneously, each influencing all of the others. 3
--the model of qualitative research design...emphasizes that research design does not begin from a fixed starting point or proceed through a determinate sequence of steps, and it recognizes the

importance of interconnection and interaction among the different design components. 3
--Write lots of memos, throughout the course of your research project; remember that in qualitative research, design is something that goes on during the entire study, not just at the beginning. Memos can be written on methodological issues, ethics, personal reactions, or anything else about your study. Think of memos as a kind of decentralized field journal; if you prefer, you can write your memos in an actual journal.12
--the purposes of your study are an essential part of your research design. 14
--There are five particular research purposes for which qualitative studies are especially suited: 1. Understanding the meaning, for participants in the study, of the events, situations, and actions they are involved with and of the accounts that they give of their lives and experiences. 2. Understanding the particular context within which the participants act, and the influence that this context has on their actions. 3. Identifying unanticipated phenomena and influences, and generating new grounded theories about the latter. 4. Understanding the process by which events and actions take place. 5. Developing causal explanations. 19
--Variance theory deals with variables and the correlations among them; it is based on the analysis of the contribution of differences in values to particular variables to difference in other variables. Process theory, in contrast, deals with events and the processes that connect them; it is based on the analysis of causal processes by which some events influence others. 20
--Separating your research from other aspects of your life cuts you off from a major source of insights, hypotheses, and validity checks. 28
--Lecompte and Preissle state (1993:239) that "theorizing is simply the cognitive process of discovering or manipulating abstract categories and the relationships among these categories". 31
--A useful high-level theory gives you a framework for making sense of what you see. Particular pieces of data that otherwise might seem unconnected or irrelevant to one another or to your research questions can be related by fitting them into the theory. The concepts of the existing theory are the "coat hooks" in the closet; they provide places to "hang" data, showing their relationship to other data. However, no theory will accommodate all data equally well; a theory that neatly organizes some data disheveled and lying of the floor, with no place to hang them. 33
--A useful theory illuminates what you are seeing in your research. It draws your attention to particular events or phenomena and sheds light on relationships that might otherwise go unnoticed or be misunderstood. 33
--a variance map usually deals with abstract, general concepts and is essentially timeless; it depicts how some factors or properties of things (conceptualized as variables) influence others. A process map, on the other hand, tells a chronological story; there is a beginning and end, and the categories are presented as specific events rather than variables. 43
--specific questions are generally the result of an interactive design process, rather than being the starting point for that process. 49
--Instrumentalists formulate their questions in terms of observable or measurable data. They worry about the potential validity threats (such as self-report bias) that inference to unobservable phenomena entails, and prefer to stick with what they can directly verify. Realists, in contrast, do not assume that research questions and conclusions about feelings, beliefs, intentions, prior behavior, effects, and so on need to be reduced to, or reframed as, questions and conclusions about the actual data that one uses. Instead they treat their data as fallible evidence about these phenomena, to be used critically to develop and test ideas about the existence and nature of the

phenomena. 57
--the general principle known as triangulation [is] collecting information from a diverse range of individuals and settings, using a variety of methods. 75
--In qualitative research...the goal of coding is not to produce counts of things, but to fracture the data and rearrange it into categories that facilitate the comparison of data within and between these categories and that aid in the development of theoretical; concepts. 78-9
--contextualizing strategies operate quite differently from categorizing ones such as coding. Instead of fracturing the initial texts into discrete elements and re-sorting it into categories, contextualizing analysis attempts to understand the data (usually, but not necessarily, an interview transcript or other textual material) in context, using various methods to identify the relationships among the different elements of the text. 79
--As Brinberg and McGrath (1985: 13) put it, "Validity is not a commodity that can be purchased with techniques". Instead it depends on your relationship of your conclusions to the real world, and there are no methods that can assure you that you have adequately grasped those aspects of the world that you are studying. 86
--Validity is a goal rather than a product; it has been assessed in relationship to the purposes and circumstances of the research, rather than being a context-independent property of methods or conclusions. Finally, validity threats are made implausible by evidence, not methods; methods are only a way of getting evidence that can help you rule out these threats. 86
--validity refer[s] to the correctness or credibility of a description, conclusion, explanation, interpretation, or other sort of account. 87

Morgan, D. "Focus Groups: Forthcoming in the Annual Review of Sociology," morgand@pdx.edu.
--[Focus groups] acknowledges the researcher's active role in creating the group discussion for data collection purposes. 2
--focus groups should be distinguished from other groups whose primary purpose is something other than research, including such purposes as: therapy, decision-making, education, organizing, or behavior change. 2
--According to dimensions that define their typology, group interviews are something other than focus groups if they: are conducted in informal settings; use non-directive interviewing; or use unstructured question formats. 3
--Others have argued, however, that the value of focus groups goes well beyond listening to others, since they can serve as either basis for empowering "clients" or as a tool in action and participatory research. 5
--focus groups are of greatest utility when they reproduce the results of the standard methods in a particular field. 8
--such interaction offers valuable data on the extent of consensus and diversity among the participants. 12
--it is the moderator, rather than the ongoing work of the group, that determines the agenda and form of discussion. 12
--it is important not to confuse the standard decision-making paradigm in small groups research with the data gathering goals of focus groups.

Dey, I. *Grounding Grounded Theory*, *Guidelines for Qualitative Inquiry*, Academic Press.

--Glaser and Strauss suggested that theory must "fit the situation being researched, and work when put into use" (1967, p.3). 3
--In grounded theory, Glaser and Straus argued, "initial decisions are not based on a preconceived theoretical framework" (1967, p.45). 3
--the researcher had to explore evidence in its own terms rather than immediately fitting it into some preconceived framework. 4
--In grounded theory...sampling decisions were based on the preceding analysis. 5
--Theory is not stable but "evolves," and in the process it accommodates to and absorbs new information about the conditions and complexities of social interaction. Thus theory as a systematic set of interrelated concepts is not static, since the relationship between concepts is subject to continual adaptation and modification. New evidence rarely overthrows the original theory--instead it shows how to adapt or modify it to take this evidence into account. Thus theoretical progress is made through a smooth process of continual enrichment rather than marked by a staccato of sporadic rejections and renewals. 31
--G&S: verifying as much as possible with as accurate evidence as possible is requisite while one discovers and generates his theory--but not to the point where verification becomes so paramount as to curb generation. (p. 28) 37

Schuman H., and Presser, S. *Questions and Answers in Attitude Surveys: Experiments on Question form, Wording, and Context*, New York: Academic Press.
--different ways of measuring magnitude can yield different conclusions and therefore no estimated magnitude can be definitive, even apart from sampling error. For this reason, significance testing is indispensable to our research, although we attempt throughout to be sensitive to factors such as sample size that are critical to evaluating obtained levels of significance. p.20
--A major threat to the interpretation of any question for difference--or indeed any survey result at all--is the possible impact of preceding parts of the questionnaire. What looks to be a response due to question form or content may be in fact partly or entirely due to question order. Moreover, order effects can conceivably occur within questions, as well as between them, and such unintended response-order effects may be confounded with more deliberate experimental variations in question form. 23
--The ambiguity [of questions] has to do with the nature of language, the fact that words and sentences take part of their meaning from the context in which they occur. 30
--merely placing two questions with similar content next to each other does not necessarily create an order effect. Only if respondents have a need to make their answers to the second question consistent with their answers to the first will such an order effect be created. 35
--answers to closed questions can...be affected by the order in which alternatives are read. Thus differences in responses to open and close questions could be due merely to order effects on the closed version of the question. 62
-it is not the sheer number of alternatives or even the total number of words that create response order effects. 62
--we do not see any consistent evidence that response-order effects vary systematically by educational level. 71
--The open question can allow responses that an investigator does not anticipate, yet at the same time it can subtly prevent responses that the investigator considers legitimate. 87

--Once so developed, however, we think that closed form of the question is superior because it separates types of responses that were often indistinguishable in the open coding, while at the same time it merges responses that the open coding tends to separate because of nonsubstantive verbal differences in expression. Whatever the advantages of the open question for assessing salience and for avoiding social desirability effects--and we have been unable to discover firm evidence that either of these advantages actually occurs--there seem to be even greater disadvantages arising from vagueness of expression by respondents, frequent failures to probe adequately by interviewers, and occasional misunderstanding by coders. All this is avoided in closed questions, where respondents are in essence asked to chose themselves, with minimal intervention by third parties. In sum, although open questions seem essential in obtaining the frame of reference of respondents and for wording alternatives appropriately, once t
his is done we are unable to find any compelling reason to keep the open form for the work values question. 104
--We have shown that DK [Don't Know] filters can substantially increase the proportion of respondents who give DK responses, and that this increase itself is a function of the nature of the filter used. 143

Stringer, E. (1999) *Action Research*, 2nd edn., Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
--Policies and programs should not dictate specific actions and procedures but should provide the resources to enable appropriate action to be taken. 2
--In this process, we must change our vision of social service workers and administrators from one of professional as mechanic/technician to one of professional as creative investigator and problem solver. This new vision rejects the mindless application of standardized practices across all settings and contexts and instead advocates the use of contextually relevant procedures formulated by inquiring and resourceful practitioners. 3
--Research can also incorporate actions that attempt to resolve the problem being investigated. 5
--Action research is based on the assumption that the mere recording of events and formulation of explanations by an uninvolved researcher is inadequate in and of itself. A further assumption is that those who have previously been designated as "subjects" should participate directly in research processes and that those processes should be applied in ways that benefit all participants directly. Community-based action research is a derivative of this approach to inquiry. 7
--Its purpose (AR) is to assist people in their understanding in their situation and thus in resolving problems that confront them. Put another way, community based action research provides a model for enacting local, action-oriented approaches to inquiry, applying small-scale theorizing to specific problems in specific situations. 10
--Community-based action research works on the assumption, therefore, that all stakeholders--those whose lives are affected by the problem under study--should be engaged in the processes of investigation. Stakeholders participate in a process of rigorous inquiry, acquiring information (collecting data) and reflecting on that information (analyzing) to transform their understanding about the nature of the problem under investigation (theorizing). This new set of understandings is then applied to plans for resolution of the problem (action), which, in turn, provides the context for testing hypotheses derived from group theorizing (evaluation). 10
--The role of the research facilitator, in this context, becomes more facilitative and less directive. Knowledge acquisition / production proceeds as a collective process, engaging people who have

previously been the "subjects" of research in the process of defining and redefining the corpus of understanding on which their community or organizational life is based. As they collectively investigate their own situation, stakeholders build a consensual vision of their life-world. Community-based action research results not only in a collective vision but also in a sense of community. It operates at the intellectual level as well as at social, cultural, political, and emotional levels. 11

--Community-based action research can have purely academic outcomes and may provide the basis for rich and profound theorizing and basic knowledge production, but its primary purpose is as a practical tool for solving problems experienced by people in their own professional, community, and private lives. If an action research project does nor make a difference, in a specific way, for practitioners and/or their clients, then it has failed to achieve its objective. 11

--This approach to research favors consensual and participatory procedures that enable people (a) to investigate systematically their problems and issues, (b) to formulate powerful and sophisticated accounts of their situations, and © to devise plans to deal with the problems at hand. 17

--Community-based action research is not a panacea for all ills and does not resolve all problems, but it does provide a means for people to "get a handle" on their situations and formulate effective solutions to problems they face in their public and professional lives. 18

--Community-based action research seeks to change the social and personal dynamics of the research situation so that it is noncompetitive and nonexploitative and enhances the lives of all those who participate. This collaborative approach to inquiry seeks to build positive working relationships and productive interactional and communicative styles. Its intent is to provide a climate that enables disparate groups of people to work harmoniously and productively to achieve their various goals. 21

--It seeks to link groups that potentially are in conflict so that they may attain viable, sustainable, and effective solutions to their common problems through dialogue and negotiation. 21

--In community-based action research, the role of the researcher is not that of an expert who does research but that of a resource person. He or she becomes a facilitator or consultant who acts as catalyst to assist stakeholders in defining their problems clearly and to support them as they work toward effective solutions to the issues that concern them. 25

--The "bottom up" or grassroots orientation uses stakeholding groups as the primary focus of attention and a source of decision-making. 26

--The type, nature, and quality of relationships in any social setting will have direct impacts on the quality of people's experience and, through that, the quality of outcomes of any human enterprise. Community-based action research has a primary interest, in establishing and maintaining positive working relationships. 29

--When disparate groups of people are brought together to enact cbar, the nature and style of communication among people will have significant impacts of their ability to work together effectively. Communication has direct effects on feelings of well-being and can enhance or detract from the efficacy of individuals' work. 32

--To the extent that people can participate in the process of exploring the nature and context of the problems that concern them, they have the opportunity to develop immediate and deeply relevant understandings of their situation and to be involved actively in the process of dealing with those problems. 35

--Active participation is the key to feelings of ownership that motivate people to invest their time

and energy to help shape the nature and quality of their community lives. 38
--CBAR seeks to enact an approach to inquiry that includes all relevant stakeholders in the process of investigation. It enables contexts that enable diverse groups to negotiate their various agendas in an atmosphere of mutual trust and acceptance and to work toward effective solutions to problems that concern them. 38
--By including people in the decisions about the programs and services that serve them, practitioners extend their knowledge base considerably and mobilize the resources of the community. Including more people in the process may seem to increase the possibilities for complexity and conflict, but it also enables practitioners to broaden their focus from one that seeks the immediate resolution of specific problems to more encompassing perspectives that have the potential to alleviate many interconnected problems. 40
--The task of CBAR, therefore, is to develop a context in which individuals and groups with divergent perspectives and interpretations can formulate a construction of their situation that makes sense to them all--a joint construction. 45
--Facilitators should establish convenient times and places to meet with people and should, after initial visits, contact people regularly. This way, people are more likely to feel they are included in the process, that their input is significant, and that the projects is theirs is some fundamental sense. The condition of ownership is an important element of CBAR. 49
--Research facilitators should conduct a social analysis of the setting to ensure that all relevant groups are included in the research process. Such a social analysis should identify the groups that have a stake in the problem under consideration, so that men and women from all age, social class, ethnic, racial, and religious groups, in all agencies institutions, and organizations, feel they have a voice in the proceedings. 50
--Charting the social dimensions of a setting can be useful in enabling people to visualize the diversity of groups in any social setting. All groups may not be involved in the research process, but the charting of stakeholders will help research participants identify those people who are primarily concerned with the issue at hand--sometimes known as the *critical reference groups*. 51

--The facilitator, therefore, first must establish a stance that is perceived as legitimate and nonthreatening by all major stakeholding groups. Problems will soon emerge if the researcher is perceived as a stranger prying into people's affairs for little apparent reason or as an authority attempting to impose an agenda. Although the researcher will usually be there under the auspices of some authority, that fact alone is insufficient to engage the attention or cooperation of all groups in the setting. In many situations, associations with authority may be a marked hindrance, especially if people perceive that the researcher is there to judge, control, or interfere in their affairs. 53
--Research facilitators also cannot afford to be associated too closely with any one of the stakeholding groups in the setting. Members of all groups need to feel that they can talk freely with facilitators, without fear that their comments will be divulged to members or other groups, whom, for one reason or another, they do not trust. 55
--The more freely researchers are able to participate I the ordinary lives of the people with whom they work, the more likely they are to gain the acceptance crucial to the success of CBAR. 56
--The agenda, stance, and positioning of research facilitators thus can have a considerable impact on the success, or lack of success, of an CBAR process. 56

--Initially, research facilitators should develop an understanding of the setting's social dynamics. They need to identify stakeholding groups, key people, the nature of the community, the purposes and organizational structure of relevant institutions and agencies, and the quality of relationships between and among individuals and groups. 57
--Part of the process involves learning the history of the situation with which the researchers are concerned. This will be done in more detail at a later stage of the process, but researchers need to know what has gone on with regard to key issues prior to their arrival. 57
--The open dialogue that constitutes a core ingredient of our research processes runs the risk of disturbing a carefully controlled and regulated social environment. 62
--The relationships and forms of communication that evolve set the stage for the inclusive and participatory processes that are the basis for common unity and productive action. 62
--Problems do not exist in isolation but are part of a complex network of evens, activities, perceptions, beliefs, values, routines, and rules--a cultural system maintained through the life of the group, organization, or community. As people reveal relevant details of their situation, they see more clearly the ways in which the research problem or focus is linked to features of their organizational, professional, and/or community lives. This disclosure leads people past their taken-for-granted perspectives and promotes more satisfying, sophisticated, and complete descriptions of their situation. 66
--CBAR, however, seeks a negotiated account that includes the perspectives, interests, and agendas of all parties. Described in the management literature as a "win, win, win" scenario, consensus is attained through careful processes of translation, modification, and accommodation. 67
--Research facilitators should take a neutral stance throughout these activities, and neither affirm, nor dispute, verbally, or nonverbally, the information that emerges. At the same time, they should remain keenly attentive, recording responses as accurately as possible. 70
--A community profile provides a structured way for participants to determine clearly the range of influences likely to have an impact on the problem under investigation. The information ensures that a broad range of relevant features of the situation are taken into account and paves the way for effective and sustainable projects and programs. 79
--public meetings provide contexts in which individuals or groups in conflict meet for the first time. Without preliminary work, these types of meetings may degenerate into conflict-laden situations that serve only to reinforce antagonisms and exacerbate existing problems. Public meetings, therefore, should be used only after various stakeholder groups have had the opportunity to meet in safe and comfortable contexts to explore their issues and to clarify their thoughts and perceptions. This is imperative when large organizations and institutions provide the context for a people. 81
--Meetings should reflect the participatory intent of CBAR; it is important, therefore, to ensure that people who can legitimately speak for the interests of each stakeholding groups attend. 82
--Researchers should view heir initial social analysis to confirm that all groups are appropriately represented by individuals who can legitimately take on the role of spokesperson. 83
--A meeting is best led by a neutral chair or facilitator--a person perceived as having no overriding loyalty to any particular stakeholding group. 83
--The chair or facilitator should employ judicious, diplomatic, yet firm processes to ensure that such people do not stifle the diverse agendas and perspectives that are essential components of the process. 83

--Meetings should operate on the basis on consensus, rather than on the basis of majority vote. The latter encourages competitive, divisive polticking, which usually ensures that the least powerful groups will not have their interests met. Although consensus is sometimes difficult to attain, it is a powerful instrument for change when it is achieved. 85
--Because diverse perspectives exist in any situation, an action research process ensures that members of each stakeholding group can comprehend the interpretations of other groups with whom they are working. 91
--Researchers should be wary, however, of simplifying the research process by confining it to a small iner circle or by omitting "troublesome" stakeholders. Participation boosts personal investment in the process, extends people's understanding of the contxts and social processes in which they are involved, and minimizes the possibility that the research will bog down in conflict. CBAR is not just a tool for solving problems; it is a valuable resource for building a sense of community. 112
--As they reflect on the information derived from processes of interpretation, they have opportunities to conceive of solutions to problems with a degree of clarity often difficult to accomplish in the rush and clutter of their day-to-day lives. If research facilitators have been successful in developing productive working relationships in the early stages of the research process, the planning stage should be relatively painless. 116
--If stakeholders can agree on a course of action and become engaged in activities that they see as purposeful and productive, they are likely to invest considerable time and energy in research activities, developing a sense of ownership that maximizes the likelihood of success. 117
--Voting procedures should be avoided, as they tend to result in win/lose processes that weaken the community-building process. 117
--The heart of CBAR is not the techniques and procedures that guide action but the sense of unity that holds people to a collective vision of their world and inspires them to work together for the common good. 121
--The participatory and inclusive relationships enacted in CBAR provide the benefit of a harmonious, supportive, and energizing environment that is not only personally rewarding but also productive practically. 123
--As participants attempt to implement the tasks that have been set, research facilitators should (a) provide the emotional and organizational support they need to keep them on track and to maintain their energy, (b) model sound community-based processes, and © link the participants to a supportive network. 124
--Facilitators should communicate with each participant regularly and organize simply ways in which participants with similar or related tasks can communicate. 14
--the researcher's mediating role is to assist the parties in conflict in coming to a resolution that is satisfactory to everyone. The task is to manage the conflict so that all parties can describe their situation clearly, analyze the sources of conflict, and work towards a resolution that enable them to maintain positive working relationships. 126
--This method of evaluation is consonant with the constructivist philosophy that is inherent in CBAR. It defines outcomes in ends that are acceptable to stakeholders, rather than those whose degree of success may be measures against some set fixed criteria. 132
--In almost all situations, some people will resist changes of any sort unless the processes are carefully defined and their interests taken into account. 137

--Facilitators must work with participants to ensure that they are able to maintain the autonomy and integrity of their work but avoid the style, manner, and forms of operation that typify many bureaucratic settings. They need, above all, to maintain approaches to their work that preserve active participation and a sense of community among all participants. 137
--As community-based research projects increase in extent and complexity, the tools and resources of management become increasingly relevant. Research facilitators and other participants need organizational and management skills to ensure the wide range of activities, constraints, forces, and pressures that impinge on their activities. 139
--As people work toward a collective vision that clarifies the nature of the problems that have brought them together, they gain a greater understanding of the complexities of the situation in which they are enmeshed. They also gain a more holistic understanding of the multitude of factors within which problems are embedded and realize the need to formulate increasingly sophisticated plans to resolve them. 140
--The first impulse in CBAR must be to build links and formulate complementary coalitions, rather than divide the social setting into friends and enemies. 146
--Research facilitators need to be aware of the political dimensions of the settings in which they work to deal with these situations. They can enlist those individuals and groups who are likely to assist them or to be in favor of their activities, as well as those who are likely to resist because they believe the researchers' activities to be against their interests. 147
--Sometimes it is easier to set up a committee within an existing institution or organization. The research facilitator should be wary of taking this step, however, because research processes are easily taken over or distorted by the policies and procedures of established organizations. Further, existing institutions, agencies, and organizations are sometimes held in disfavor by, or alienated from, some stakeholder groups, to the extent that they may be unwilling to work under the auspices of particular organizations. Members are marginalized groups, for instance, are particularly distrustful of government agencies and institutions, often perceiving them as agents of control as much as service deliverers. 151
--As facilitators assist participants in organizing and implementing activities, they should consciously enact the key concepts and principles of community-based research, constantly providing with information about what is happening, maintaining positive working relationships, and including all stakeholders as active participants in planning and decision-making activities. 155
--As stakeholders work through the recursive processes of observation, reflection, planning, and review, they are involved in a constant process of evaluation that enables them to monitor their activities and their progress. 158
--Evaluation should, ultimately, assess the worth of a set of activities or a project according to its impacts on the primary stakeholders. Many evaluations focus on the activities in which project members engage but 158 fail to provide any indication of the extent to which the process has made an impact on the lives of the people for whom the project was formulated. 159
--Credibility is established by prolonged engagement with participants; triangulation of information from multiple data sources; member checking procedures that allow members to check and verify the accuracy of the information recorded; and peer debriefing processes that enable research facilitators to articulate and reflect on research procedures with a colleague or informed associate. 176

--Transferability is established by describing the means for applying the research findings to other contexts. Fundamentally, the possibility of applying findings across settings is established through thickly detailed descriptions that enable audiences to identify similarities of the research setting with other contexts. 176 Put another way, it enables other audiences to see themselves and / or their situations in the accounts presented. 177

--its [CBR] purpose is to build collaboratively constructed descriptions and interpretations of events that enable groups of people to formulate mutually acceptable solutions to their problems. 188

--The dynamism of social life and the creative and willful facets of human behavior prevent the high degrees of control that are embedded in scientific method and technological production. Attempts to impose the same type and extent of control in the delivery of human services have led to increasing levels of stress and alienation as practitioners struggle to provide necessary services within the boundaries of increasingly restrictive policies and procedural rules. 194

--The desire to give voice to people is derived not from an abstract ideological or theoretical imperative but from the pragmatic focus of action research. 207