

**Methodological issues in focus group research:  
The example of investigating counsellors' experiences of working with same-sex  
couples**

Danielle Pearson

The Open University

Andreas Vossler

The Open University

---

Danielle Pearson, PhD, Faculty of Social Science, The Open University, Milton Keynes,  
MK7 6AA, UK. E-mail: [Danielle.Pearson@open.ac.uk](mailto:Danielle.Pearson@open.ac.uk) (Corresponding author)

Andreas Vossler, PhD, Department of Psychology, Faculty of Social Science, The Open  
University, Milton Keynes, UK. Tel.: E-mail: [Andreas.Vossler@open.ac.uk](mailto:Andreas.Vossler@open.ac.uk)

## **Abstract**

*Background:* Focus groups are a widely utilised research method in an array of disciplines including the social sciences and, more specifically, in counselling and psychotherapy. They can be effective in assessing attitudes, opinions and experiences relative to a specific context and are relatively time and cost efficient. However, there are also potential limitations with this method, such as a reduced opportunity to participate for individuals and an increased likelihood of conformity in the group setting.

*Aims:* This paper explores methodological issues in conducting and interpreting focus groups, illustrated with data from our own study on couple counsellors' experiences of working with same-sex couples.

*Method:* Data was collected via three focus groups with 11 Relate counsellors and analysed using thematic analysis. The research process was used to reflect upon the experience of conducting and interpreting focus group data.

*Results/Discussion:* The advantages and disadvantages of using focus groups are exemplified in various ways, including evaluating benefits and shortcomings in a different light by considering them as situation specific methodological issues of group interaction and group dynamics. Issues in data analysis are demonstrated by stressing the importance of appraising the content, interaction, and the socio-cultural and biographical contexts of the focus group, participants, and the moderator.

*Implications:* The paper concludes with implications for future research employing focus group methodology.

*Keywords:* focus groups, methodological issues, same-sex couples, couple counselling

## **Introduction**

Focus groups have been in use since the 1920s for a range of purposes, in a wide variety of fields including marketing, business, and health settings (Wilkinson, 2008). They are now a broadly used method in social science research (Hopkins, 2007) and, more specifically, frequently employed in qualitative counselling and psychotherapy research on perceptions of psychotherapy trainees of psychotherapy research (Widdowson, 2012); and on therapists' attitudes to therapist self-disclosure (Carew, 2009). Focus groups can be utilised in almost any applied counselling and psychotherapy research environment and help to answer an array of research questions, often combined with other qualitative or quantitative methods (Kress & Shoffner, 2007).

Bedford and Burgess (2001) provide a definition of a focus group as 'a one-off meeting of between four and eight individuals who are brought together to discuss a particular topic chosen by the researcher(s) who moderate or structure the discussion' (p. 121). Ideal focus group sample sizes vary in the literature (Carlson & Glenton, 2011), with some studies reporting as little as two participants up to 12 participants (Morgan, 1997). Debate continues amongst researchers about how to use focus groups, the practicalities of conducting them, and the best method of data analysis (Krueger & Casey, 2000; Morgan, 1996; Wilkinson, 2000; 2008). Focus groups are effective in assessing attitudes, opinions, and experiences relative to a specific context (Myers, 1998). They can be convenient to conduct, have high face validity, produce 'speedy results' (Krueger, 1988), and are time and cost effective relative to reaching the same number of participants to interview individually (Krueger & Casey, 2000). Conversely,

there are noteworthy disadvantages such as increased difficulty with transcribing (Krueger, 1994) especially as some participants talk over each other (Wilkinson, 2008). The higher number of participants in a focus group increases the risk of members breaching confidentiality agreements (McParland & Flowers, 2012), may result in less opportunity to participate (Wibeck, Abrandt Dahlgren & Öberg, 2007), and could elevate the likelihood of conformity (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990).

However, whilst focus groups are now a popular research approach in the field of counselling and psychotherapy (Kress & Shoffner, 2007), Dallos and Vetere (2005, p. 187) warn that; “there is not much critical literature available to guide the researcher” when doing this kind of research. To add to the critical reflection and evaluation of focus groups as research tool, this paper aims to explore methodological concerns arising in conducting and analysing focus groups, applying them to our own focus group research on the experiences of Relate counsellors of working with same-sex couples.

This research was conducted as part of the first author’s PhD exploring same-sex couples in long-term relationships. A major aim of the project was to explore same-sex couples in relationships *and* Relate counsellors’ knowledge regarding same-sex couples. Relate is a relationship counselling organisation established 75 years ago with couple counselling, psychosexual therapy, and counselling for young people and families as core service provisions (Relate, 2009). The insights from this project may be able to inform Relate’s counsellor training and development, and increase the accessibility of their services for same-sex couples.

The purpose of the focus group research was to investigate the knowledge counsellors' have of same-sex relationships particularly regarding their *understandings* of same-sex couple relationships, their *attitudes* towards potential difficulties same-sex couples face and their *experiences* of working with same-sex couples. The full results of these focus groups will be presented elsewhere. The emphasis here is on the methodological reflections and implications of conducting focus groups rather than on the analysis itself. Thus, the data, alongside researcher reflections, are used to illustrate methodological issues in moderating and analysing focus groups for research purposes. This adds a reflective element to the paper and further situates the research in context.

## **Methodology**

### *Participants and procedure*

Three focus groups were conducted with, in total, 11 Relate counsellors at three separate locations around England comprising of two Relate centres and the annual Relate AGM. Each focus group was moderated by the first author and lasted 45 minutes to one hour. Focus group 1 comprised three counsellors from different Relate centres who convened especially for the group. Focus group 2 consisted of five counsellors who worked at the same centre and therefore knew each other prior to the focus group. Focus group 3 contained three counsellors who self-identified as LGB, two of whom knew each other through professional networks. Table 1 provides an overview of the demographic information for all participants.

**Table 1: Demographic information on participants †X**

Focus Group	Pseudonym	Age	Sex/ Gender	Sexual Orientation	Ethnicity	Relationship Status	Highest Education Level	Job Title	Counselling Experience	Experience with Same-Sex Couples	LGBT Training Experiences
1	Jean		Female	Hetero-sexual	White British	Married	MSc		30 years (15 Relate)	Moderate	Relate London CPD
1	Izzy		Female	Hetero-sexual	White British	Married	MA Degree	Supervisor/ Lecturer	16 years	Limited	CPDs
1	Nina	55	Female	Hetero-sexual	White British	Couple - Living Together	MA	Senior supervisor & Lecturer	17 years	Moderate	CPD at LGBT; teaching and reading
2	Nancy	53	Female	Hetero-sexual	White British	Married	Postgrad degree	Counsellor	9 years		Years ago CPD Day!
2	Diane	55	Female	Hetero-sexual	White British	Married	MA	Counsellor	7 years	Moderate	Relate on MA
2	Lola	51	Female	Hetero-sexual	Asian - Other Asian Background	Married	Degree	Couple Counsellor	17 years	Moderate	Yes - continuously
2	John	62	Male	Hetero-sexual	White British	Married	PG Diploma	Relationship Counsellor	10 years	Limited	One workshop
2	Margaret	59	Female	Hetero-sexual	White British	Married	MA	Psycho-therapist	25 years	Moderate	CPD workshop, Relate PGDip
3	Stephen	47	Male	Gay	White British	Couple - Living Together	MA	Relationship therapist	5 years	Limited	Pink Therapy CPDs
3	Ellen	55	Other - Fluid	Gay	White British	Not getting round to dating	MA/MSc	HE Programme leader	12 years	Limited	Relate training, CPDs and research
3	Nicki	60	Female	Bisexual	White British	Married	BSc Psychology	Counsellor	5.5 Years	Limited	Relate training

† All names have been changed to preserve confidentiality  
X Blank Values indicate no answer given.

### *Reflections on Conducting the Focus Groups*

The focus groups were recorded and the resulting audio tapes transcribed and analysed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). During the research process, reflexive engagement with the research and the data was facilitated through ongoing discussions between the researchers. Field notes during data collection and analytical memos during analysis were kept which enabled this reflexive engagement. This iterative reflection process helped to recognise and reconsider the benefits and shortcomings of this focus group research.

The experience of conducting these focus groups has provided valuable insights especially concerning the effect the moderator may have on the research. The role of the moderator is important in focus groups (Krueger & Casey, 2000). The first author's demographic factors may have had a distinctive effect on data collection and participant engagement. As someone who identifies as non-heterosexual, the moderator chose to disclose this to participants. This may have had interesting implications where she may have been perceived as 'other' in the first two focus groups and as an 'insider' in the final focus group (Kitzinger, 1994). Furthermore, her professional status as a young researcher and an age difference of 20 years or more between herself and the participants, may have automatically positioned her as 'other' in all focus groups.

### *Ethics*

Ethical consent was sought and obtained from the Open University's Ethics Committee. The focus group study was conducted in accordance with the frameworks

of the British Psychological Society and the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy.

### **Results: Methodological Issues in Focus Group Research**

The focus groups were successful in accessing Relate counsellors' knowledge of same-sex couples resulting in data involving accounts of experiences, points of view regarding problems same-sex couples face, and potential differences compared to heterosexual couples. Conducting and analysing the three focus groups also proved insightful for evaluating the methodology more generally.

During each focus group and upon data analysis, it was felt pertinent to consider the context of the group interactions. Research notes much focus group research analyses the content of data rather than the interaction (Belzile & Öberg, 2012; Wilkinson, 2000). Yet, the experience with this study shows paying attention to the content alone was insufficient as it ignored the multifaceted interactions. Attending to how individuals were communicating, noticing the subtleties of the group dynamic, and taking into account individual demographic factors, allowed a deeper awareness of participants' accounts.

Due to the interplay of these characteristics, each group was diverse. Focus group 1 felt quite neutral with participants candidly offering their views and opinions, where they openly recalled experiences potentially casting them positively and/or negatively. Focus group 2 appeared to have a more defensive tone whereby participants talked about 'different differences', appearing to ensure they were expressing politically



correct professional views. Focus group 3 seemed to have a tone of frustration whereby the counsellors seemed almost exasperated with their continual role in raising awareness of diversity issues due to their own sexual orientation. Reading the tone in this way and evaluating the interaction, dynamics, and context, led us to consider the advantages and disadvantages as methodological issues. These can be beneficial *or* limiting depending on the circumstances surrounding data collection. We demonstrate this with the methodological issues of group interaction and group dynamics.

### *Group Interaction*

The interactional element of focus groups is a recognised advantage of the method (Merton, Fiske & Kendall, 1990). It means participants can react to and build upon other responses (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990) and potentially facilitate recall in other participants (McParland & Flowers, 2012). This happened frequently in all three focus groups with participants often being reminded of examples of their own experiences because of another participant's narrative or elaborating on a subject another participant raised. This is illustrated when Nina talks about working with an individual male client:

***'Nina:** ...and he wanted to really be able to have a fulfilled sexual relationship with her. I felt that he was internalising some other idea of being gay, and hadn't really sort of explored his own nature and how he felt...and was possibly a candidate for individual counselling rather than continuing with Relate. Although, he found it extremely helpful, and sent a letter saying how useful he*

*had found it to talk freely sexually with a woman. You know that he was able to talk about his male sexual activity, um and his female sexual activity, with a female.*

***Ellen:** I do think that's one of the strengths actually in Relate is that we can actually talk about sex. 'Cos, um, I did my masters research on what counsellors, who were sexual minority counsellors, thought of any input on sexual minority issue in their counselling training... it was kinda like nobody talks about sexual minority on counselling training on the whole it seems not much, and um, nobody talks about sex either... (Focus Group 3)*

Nina's account allows Ellen to elaborate on the openness of talking about sex with clients within Relate. This account from Ellen may not have been elicited but for the building of the interaction. There were other occurrences where participants would describe a contrasting or similar story in relation to a prior example. These manifestations of story building are a distinct advantage of having a group dialogue on a subject. The interactional element allows for the collection of experiences that may not have presented themselves in other methods (McParland & Flowers, 2012) and may increase the likelihood of accessing 'naturally occurring' data (Kitzinger, 1994).

The nature of this interactional element can also pose potential limitations. Pain and Townshend (2002) maintain there is a possibility for focus groups to move off-topic. However, in our research, moving off-topic allowed for exploration into how the counsellors perceive same-sex couples. For example, in focus group 2, moving off-topic led to participants talking about other 'minority' groups, race issues and comparisons

to heterosexuals which enabled an insight into how the counsellors constructed their own stances and connected same-sex couples to other groups of people. Similarly, something that might be considered off-topic in focus group 1 was actually highly relevant to the participants' experiences offering valuable, unanticipated insight:

***Jean:** It's interesting 'cos only the male couples that I've had, have had domestic violence and it's been quite horrific... And helping them to understand that violence has been really difficult... We've actually done quite a lot of work on age difference and how that can be a power balance, and the age difference has been really quite significant in a lot of the cases...*

***Moderator:** Do you see these issues of disclosure and domestic violence and age difference as unique to same-sex couples or are they issues heterosexuals come to counselling with as well?*

***Izzy:** Oh yes, absolutely. I think because we get more heterosexuals, we see a wider spread and then, what I suppose, because we're not seeing as many same-sex couples it's more noticeable. So that's where, those figures might be skewed just because we don't get as many, but ooh no gosh in real, where we work over 90% of all case work is domestic violence.*

***Jean:** And I think, ah, the only reason I'm raising it, the age difference, is because of its link to domestic violence...and power and control...*

*(Focus Group 1)'*

The original question explored experiences of counselling same-sex couples but proceeds to domestic violence and age difference. While the moderator perceived this

to move off-topic, it actually seems to enable a better understanding of the causes of domestic violence, the experiences of the counsellors, and their perceptions of age difference surrounding power and control. It also provides fundamental information into the context of Izzy's experience which is largely atypical of most Relate centres. As she notes, 90% of the cases she sees at her Relate centre are cases with domestic violence, suggesting domestic violence would undoubtedly be brought into the conversation. Therefore here, going 'off-topic' allows an understanding of consensus and diversity around certain issues (Morgan, 1996), such as the potential reasons for domestic violence occurring, and may also be useful to assess the perspectives of the counsellors including their language use (Halcomb, Gholizadeh, DiGiacomo, Phillips, & Davidson, 2007). Izzy's report on extensive work with couples who experience domestic violence does in this context not necessarily represent moving off-topic because it is a large part of her experience with same-sex couples.

Potentially beneficial effects of moving off-topic could also be observed in focus group 3. The three counsellors in this group (who self-identified as LGB) went off-topic when providing background information on their personal experiences (examples of where they have had personal experiences of discrimination in previous workplaces). Going off-topic allowed exploration of previous experiences which affect what they say in the focus group and how they experience working with same-sex couples in a way that may be different to the other counsellors in focus groups 1 and 2. Additionally, coming from more liberal settings plays a crucial role in their level of awareness surrounding same-sex couples and their experiences of Relate. This level of increased awareness may contribute to why the tone of Focus Group 3 felt so different from the others and

is essential contextual information. Generally, the process of moving off-topic allowed an appraisal of the differing tones of each focus group which may be ignored if demographic factors, such as sexual orientation or level of counselling experience with same-sex couples, are not considered.

Failing to consider the described focus group context could lead to researchers missing important information for data analysis. Moreover, context can be understood in several ways including the immediate social context of the data collection and the wider context where participants are located (Wilkinson, 2000). This may include participant (and researcher/moderator) biographical, socio-cultural, and historical contexts. Therefore, whilst there is potential for the interactional element in a focus group to become problematic, it is not always the case. The context is vital in making this evaluation. The nature of the group dynamic also plays a key role when conducting and analysing focus groups.

### *Group Dynamics*

During focus groups, the group dynamics including the potential for 'the expert' (Krueger & Casey, 2000) and dominant talkers (Pain & Townshend, 2002) may inhibit some of the other group members (Holloway & Wheeler, 2010) which could lead to personal experiences and opinions being withheld (Hollander, 2004) and create problems with conformity (Parsons & Greenwood, 2000). As Krueger and Casey (2000) note, it may be more difficult to moderate a focus group with higher numbers of participants since there is an increased likelihood of more complicated group

dynamics, particularly if the group already know each other (as was the case in Focus Group 2).

The specific group dynamics of Focus Group 2 included four women and one man. There were two females in the group who were rather vocal (Lola and Alice) and in comparison, the male participant (John) was relatively quiet. This may have led to his opinions being obscured or withheld from other group members. To put this into perspective, John spoke on 12 occasions during the focus group whereas Lola (the most dominant speaker) contributed on 62 separate occasions. Despite this, there were attempts made to bring John into the conversation:

***Diane:** Yes, everything works for you and so those are the privileges that you just take for granted. And other people who come in from another culture or another and have, sort of, different diverse minority, don't have those privileges and it's the awareness that we don't have of privileges rather than the fact have you prejudices against them. And I thought ah, I finally have got the light when people keep asking me this and suddenly go 'oh right I am privileged, I am in the mainstream.'*

***Alice:** You could only have one more privilege and that would to be a man.*

***Diane:** Yes [group laughs] wouldn't it John?*

***John:** That's for you to say.*

***Diane:** But it felt that that was a pretty interesting way of looking at your assumptions, you know, being aware of what you have that other people might not take for granted.*

*(Focus Group 2)'*

The work of including John was not, however, successful. From his short response, which returns the discussion to Diane, it appears he is reluctant to engage in the conversation. This may be due to the gender dynamics of the group or that he does not feel comfortable being identified as privileged because of his gender. The moderator recognised John was not being given the opportunity to contribute and thus directed a question specifically for John in an attempt to bring him more prominently into the conversation:

***'Moderator:** Have you found any challenges John? Working with same-sex couples?*

***John:** I think what I've tried to do is, um, treat it relationally in the same way that I would, you know, any couple and then deal with their issues as they emerged. But I think internally, it felt more challenging because it was a bit different. So in that sense yes, but, you know, because I've only had limited experience in the sense, I look forward to more experience over time really.*

*(Focus Group 2)'*

Here, his response is longer than most of his other contributions to the conversation. However, the group dynamic is already established and, following the intervention by the moderator, the focus group continues in the same vein with John making fewer contributions than the other participants. Nevertheless, John also offers another explanation for his reluctance - his limited experience with same-sex couples. But in

the context of the group discussion, John makes some very valid contributions to the focus group, therefore leading us to read his role in the group dynamic as the 'shy participant' (Kruger, 1994). This displays the difficulties in interpreting focus group research and shows the group dynamic can be more challenging to manage and analyse, especially if the participants know each other (Holbrook & Jackson, 1996). It also demonstrates the importance of attending to more than just the content of the discussion. The body language of participants and the tone of the focus group allowed us to make judgements on the dynamic which would have been impossible when analysing the content alone.

## **Discussion**

The aim with this paper was to recognise and explore methodological issues of using focus groups in the applied context. In doing so, we have provided a unique opportunity to explore how (dis)advantages of focus groups can be viewed in a differing light when assessing the context of data collection, the participants, and the role of the moderator. Using worked examples from the group discussion with counsellors, we have illustrated the impact of the interaction and dynamics of the group, and the wider context of data collection and analysis, which has led to a deeper understanding of the data.

The presented examples from our study have shown how appraising the content alone would have ignored important aspects of the focus group data. By seriously engaging with situationally specific methodological issues, it is possible to gain access to consensus and disagreement of the group discussion (Kidd & Parshall, 2000), the social



context of the focus group, and the subsequent influences over disclosure, conformity, and desirability (Hollander, 2004). It is evident how analysing the interaction can reveal shared language, taken for granted knowledge, tone of voice, and emotional engagement in participants' talk (Catterall & Maclaran, 1997). This can provide essential contextual information for reading the tone of the focus groups and assessing the group dynamics. Finally, the worked examples from our study have displayed the role of the moderator in the production of data which can affect the interaction and dynamic of the group, and the issues that are picked up in the group discussion (Morgan, 1996).

#### *Implications for Future Research*

These findings have implications for future research and highlight essential aspects of focus group methodology. Researchers considering utilizing focus groups should be aware of these methodological issues and come to explicit decisions about how they want to approach and use group interaction and dynamics in collecting and interpreting the data.

In the context of the current study, evaluating these aspects has helped to increase the depth of the data analysis. However, it would be a mistake to assume that there is one 'right' or 'proper' way to do focus group research. Belzile and Öberg (2012) argue the lack of research analysing the interaction in focus groups is due to philosophical or epistemological positions rather than neglect. How researchers deal with the outlined methodological issues is mainly driven by their theoretical perspective and the purpose of their research. For example, within a positivist framework there is the

assumption of a 'true reality' that can be discovered (Ponterotto, 2005), and the focus here is on the opinions and attitudes held and expressed by individuals in the group setting. From this perspective, group dynamics and interactions are secondary factors that might help or hinder the individually held 'truth' to emerge (Belzile & Öberg, 2012). In contrast, the social constructionist paradigm sees reality as multiple constructed subjective realities, with the underlying assumption that orientations and beliefs are not just built individually but created or 'constructed' through social interactions in specific social contexts (Ponterotto, 2005). Hence, the emphasis in focus group research from this perspective is on the ways meaning is constructed in the group process. Here, group interaction and dynamics are the primary research focus, with the moderator seen as being inevitably part of the rhetorical environment.

To illustrate the range of different possible approaches, Belzile and Öberg (2012, p. 469) have developed a 'continuum of use of interaction in focus group research' with low, medium, and high levels of interaction. Approaches with a low level are mainly focused on content and use the group interaction only during data collection to generate this content. The main interests of approaches located at the high end of the continuum are social interaction and group processes generating content (e.g. discursive research), and medium level approaches blend content with interaction by using interactional processes to contextualise the content. Whilst one method is not necessarily better or worse than another (Belzile & Öberg, 2012), the continuum can help researchers to critically reflect on the benefits and limitations of their chosen focus group method, and justify their design decision in the light of their research

goals. No matter what level of interaction use, future researchers need to consider the effects of the chosen focus group methodology on data collection and analysis.

## **Conclusion**

With this paper we hope to add to the sparse literature critically considering the methodological issues that arise when focus groups are utilised as a research method. As a substantial amount of focus group research ignores contextual information by only analysing the content, it seems important to recognise and reflect the context and situatedness of data collection and analysis when using focus groups. Exploring participant and focus group contexts, as well as group interaction processes and group dynamics, can help to develop a better understanding of potential (dis)advantages of this research approach, and to come to conscious and informed design decisions best suited to the nature of the research.

## **References**

- Bedford, T., & Burgess, J. (2001). The focus group experience. In M. Limb and C. Dwyer (eds), *Qualitative methodologies for geographers: issues and debates* (pp.121–35). New York: Arnold.
- Belzile, J. A., & Oberg, G. (2012). Where to begin? Grappling with how to use participant interaction in focus group design. *Qualitative Research, 12*(4), 459-472.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*, 77-101.

- Carew, L. (2009). Does theoretical background influence therapists' attitudes to therapist self-disclosure? A qualitative study. *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research, 9(4)*, 266-272.
- Carlson, B., & Glenton, C. (2011). What about N? A methodological study of sample-size reporting in focus group studies. *BMC Medical Research Methodology, 11(23)*, 1-10.
- Catterall, M., & Maclaran, P. (1997). Focus group data and qualitative analysis programs: coding the moving picture as well as the snapshots. *Sociological Research Online, 2(1)*, 1–13.
- Dallos, R., & Vetere, A. (2005). *Researching counselling and psychotherapy*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- Halcomb, E. J., Gholizadeh, L., DiGiacomo, M., Phillips, J., & Davidson, P. M. (2007). Literature review: Considerations in undertaking focus group research with culturally and linguistically diverse groups. *Journal of Clinical Nursing, 16*, 1000–1011.
- Holbrook, B., & Jackson, P. (1996). Shopping around: focus group research in North London. *Area, 28*, 36–52.
- Hollander, J. A. (2004). The social context of focus groups. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography, 33(5)*, 602–637.
- Holloway, I., & Wheeler, S. (2010). *Qualitative research in nursing and healthcare (3rd Edition)*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Hopkins, P. E. (2007). Thinking critically and creatively about focus groups. *Area, 39(4)*, 528-535.

- Kidd, P. S., & Parshall, M. B. (2000). Getting the focus and the group: enhancing analytical rigor in focus group research. *Qualitative Health Research, 10*(3), 293–308.
- Kitzinger, J. (1994). The methodology of focus groups: the importance of interaction between research participants. *Sociology of Health & Illness, 16*(1), 103–121.
- Kress, V.E. & Shoffner, M.F. (2007). Focus Groups: A Practical and Applied Research Approach for Counselors. *Journal of Counseling and Development, 85*(2), 189-195.
- Krueger, R. A. (1988). *Focus Groups*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Krueger, R. A. (1994). *Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research (2nd Edition)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Krueger, R.A. & Casey. M.A. (2000). *Focus groups. A practical guide for applied Research (3rd Edition)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- McParland, J. L., & Flowers, P. (2012). Nine lessons and recommendations from the conduct of focus group research in chronic pain samples. *British Journal of Health Psychology, 17*, 492-504.
- Merton R.K., Fiske, M., & Kendall P.L. (1990). *The Focused Interview: A Manual of Problems and Procedures, (2nd Edition)*. New York: Free Press.
- Morgan, D. L. (1996). Focus groups. *Annual Review of Sociology, 22*(1), 129–152.
- Morgan, D. L. (1997). *Focus Groups as Qualitative Research (2nd ed)*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Myers, G. (1998). Displaying opinions: Topics and disagreement in focus groups. *Language in Society, 27*, 85-111.

- Pain, R., & Townshend, T. (2002). A safer city centre for all? Senses of 'community safety' in Newcastle upon Tyne. *Geoforum*, 33, 105–19.
- Parsons, M., & Greenwood, J. (2000). A guide to the use of focus groups in healthcare research: Part 1. *Contemporary Nursing*, 9(2), 169–180.
- Ponterotto, J. (2005). Qualitative research in counselling psychology: A primer on research paradigms and philosophy of science. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 52, 126-136.
- Relate (2009). *Relate the difference we make: results from the measuring outcomes project*. Doncaster: Relate Institute.
- Stewart, D. W., & Shamdasani, P. M. (1990). *Focus Groups: Theory and Practice*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Wibeck, V., Abrandt Dahlgren, M., & Öberg, G. (2007). Learning in focus groups: an analytical dimension for enhancing focus group research. *Qualitative Research*, 7(2), 249–267.
- Widdowson, M. (2012). Perceptions of psychotherapy trainees of psychotherapy research. *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research*, 13, 176-186.
- Wilkinson, S. (2000). Women with breast cancer talking causes: comparing content, biographical and discursive analyses. *Feminism & Psychology*, 10(4), 431-460.
- Wilkinson, S. (2008). Focus groups. In J. A. Smith (ed.), *Qualitative psychology: a practical guide to research methods*, 2nd Edition (pp. 186-206). London: Sage.