**Annotated Bibliography**

**Using Focus Groups to Develop Concepts and Measures in Health Disparities and Minority Aging Research**

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Focus groups are widely used and serve multiple purposes in developing concepts and measures in health disparities research. Two broad applications are to: 1) explore concepts and generate items for a new measure and 2) pretest an existing measure as in a diverse group. Regarding how to conduct focus groups, we have summarized a few guides that provide information on how to write a focus group guide (open-ended questions) to obtain answers to research questions.

**(1) EXPLORE CONCEPTS AND GENERATE ITEMS FOR A NEW MEASURE**

Focus groups with diverse populations are of special value in developing new measures to be culturally sensitive and appropriate. In the formative stage of research, focus groups help obtain the perspectives of persons for whom the concept is relevant. Focus groups elicit information on how target respondents think about an issue and articulate it in their own words; this allows research to reflect the concerns and issues of those being studied. The group format enables participants to respond to moderator questions as well as to comments made by other participants. Focus groups are especially useful to explore poorly understood and complex phenomena. Examples are emerging in the literature of how focus group transcripts can be analyzed to generate candidate domains and items for structured surveys on a specific health related topic.

**Daley CM, James AS, Ulrey E, Joseph S, Talawyma A, Choi W.S, Greiner KA, Coe MK. Using focus groups in community-based participatory research: challenges and resolutions. *Qualitative Health Research*. 2010; 20(5): 697-706.** [**PMCID: 2947156**](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2947156/)

The authors describe three focus group studies with American Indians in Kansas and Missouri, using a newly developed method of conducting and analyzing focus groups with community input. The community members and researchers collaborated to develop guides for the focus group moderators. Community organizations and their community advisory board conducted recruitment, and the research team trained and employed community members as moderators, assistant moderators, and analysts. The authors conclude that techniques must be tailored to the community with whom you are working, and is an ongoing effort.

**Hughes D, DuMont K. Using focus groups to facilitate culturally anchored research. *American Journal of Community Psychology*. 1993;21:775-806.** [**https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/BF00942247**](https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/BF00942247)

The authors describe how focus groups were used to formulate a research model and develop instruments in an area with little prior research, namely, work and parenting issues in African American dual-earner families. The article illustrates how focus groups facilitate culturally sensitive research. In this context, they were used to understand from participants’ perspectives, how being African American shaped their experiences as employees and parents. New survey items to assess interpersonal racism and racial socialization also resulted from the focus groups. Examples are provided on the use of focus groups to develop new items, revise item wording, and pretest the clarity and relevance of existing items. Examples of coding schemes used to identify a smaller number of constructs to summarize a large volume of data are also provided.

**Nápoles-Springer AM, Santoyo J, Houston K, Perez-Stable EJ, Stewart AL. Patients' perceptions of cultural factors affecting the quality of their medical encounters. *Health Expectations*. Mar 2005;8(1):4-17. PMCID:[PMC5060265](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5060265/)**

Focus groups were used to identify key domains of cultural competence from the perspective of ethnically and linguistically diverse patients. Participants were asked the meaning of 'culture' and what cultural factors influenced the quality of their medical encounters. This article provides an example of how to content analyze the transcripts using text units (identifiable continuous verbal utterances) to identify key dimensions using inductive and deductive methods. The findings corroborated aspects of physician cultural competence indicated in the literature but also highlighted aspects not represented in current quality measures.

**Sprague Martinez L, Freeman ER, Winkfield KM. Perceptions of cancer care and clinical trials in the Black community: implications for care coordination between oncology and primary care teams. *Oncologist* 2017 Sep;22(9):1094-1101.** [**PMCID:PMC5599206**](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5599206/)

The authors first employed key informant interviews with health care providers, patient advocates, and grassroots organizers to develop focus group guides. They then employed this guide to conduct focus groups with African American Boston residents that included cancer survivors and family members. Investigators describe feelings of fear and potential exploitation as barriers to clinical trial participation, some of which were grounded in experiences of discrimination by providers that led to feelings of mistrust. Even though primary care providers were viewed as a trusted source of medical information, patients reported being rarely informed by these providers about cancer clinical trial participation. The authors conclude that better care coordination between primary care providers and oncology teams might serve as intervention points for closing disparities in cancer clinical trial participation experienced by African American cancer patients.

**Stein KF, Trabold N, Connelly K. Unhealthy weight control strategies: an outcome of body image and eating tensions in women of Mexican origin living in rural farming communities. *Journal of Health Psychology*. 2017; Mar 1 . doi: 10.1177/1359105317694490. [Epub ahead of print].** [**PMCID:PMC5732071**](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5732071/)

The authors conducted focus groups to identify body weight and shape perceptions, and thoughts and behaviors related to eating and weight control of low acculturated Mexican American living in disadvantaged economic situations. The use of these qualitative techniques allowed the investigators to identify perceptions and experiences related to both body weight and eating/food that were shaped and influenced by cultural, familial, and inter/intrapersonal factors including age, emotions, and concerns related to health. Contradictory to prevailing stereotypes that less acculturated Latinos and Latinas prefer fuller curvaceous figures, this study found that women and their family members worried about participants’ being overweight and the health implications.

**Wong ST, Yoo GJ, Stewart AL. Examining the types of social support and the actual sources of support in older Chinese and Korean immigrants. *International Journal of Aging and Human Development*. 2005;61(2):105-121. PMID:[16161288](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.2190/AJ62-QQKT-YJ47-B1T8)**

Focus groups with older Cantonese and Korean speaking immigrants explored social support domains and sources of support. Four domains similar to traditional concepts and measures included tangible, information/advice, emotional support, and companionship. They also identified needing language support as relevant for these non-English speaking groups. This article illustrates how a concept may be understood in a different way than intended when used in diverse groups, as the Chinese and Korean elders defined emotional support in a way not found in the literature on social support.

**(2) PRETEST EXISTING MEASURES**

Focus groups (as well as cognitive interviews) can be used to determine the relevance and appropriateness of existing measures primarily developed in mainstream populations. When problems are identified, focus group transcripts can provide information that can help in modifying the measures.

**Vogt DS, King DW, King LA. Focus groups in psychological assessment: enhancing content validity by consulting members of the target population. *Psychological Assessment*. 2004;16:231-243. PMID:[15456379](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/?term=15456379)**

The authors explain the importance of consulting members of target populations for content validation of existing measures in new populations. They examine the role of focus groups in the process of adapting measures for diverse populations. They describe how the focus groups led to the expansion and addition of constructs, the confirmation of existing items, and the identification of relevant quotes that could be used for new items. The appendices provide examples of detailed definitions of constructs and the focus group guide.

**Weech-Maldonado R, Weidmer BO, Morales LS, Hays RS. *Cross-cultural adaptation of survey instruments: the CAHPS® experience*. Seventh Conference on Health Survey Research Methods (Lynamon ML & Kulke RA, eds). Hyattsville, MD: DHHS Publication No. 01-1013, 2001.** [**https://www.researchgate.net/publication/285879837\_Cross-cultural\_adaptation\_of\_survey\_instruments\_The\_CAHPS\_experience**](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/285879837_Cross-cultural_adaptation_of_survey_instruments_The_CAHPS_experience)

The authors provide recommendations for cross-cultural adaptations of survey instruments using examples from the Consumer Assessment of Health Plans Study (CAHPS®). Technical equivalence, equivalence in grammar and syntax, is distinguished from conceptual equivalence, absence of differences in meaning and content between two versions of an instrument. The authors propose a framework that comprises 3 activities: translation; qualitative analysis; and field test and analyses. Focus groups were used to investigate the appropriateness of the CAHPS® survey content for Spanish-speaking Latino patients enrolled in Medicaid.

**(3) PRACTICAL GUIDES ON METHODS FOR CONDUCTING FOCUS GROUPS**

**Kruegar RA, Casey MA. *Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research*, 5th ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc., 2002.** [**https://us.sagepub.com/en-us/nam/focus-groups/book243860**](https://us.sagepub.com/en-us/nam/focus-groups/book243860)

Adapted from the website: This updated edition of Krueger and Casey’s bestselling, practical book walks readers step by step through the “how-tos” of conducting focus group research. The authors draw on their many years of hands-on experience in the field to cut through theory and offer practical guidance on every facet of the focus group process, including tips for avoiding problems and pitfalls. The 5th edition reflects the most recent research and technological innovations. It includes planning with analysis in mind; creating conversational questions with potential for producing valuable insights; the art of hosting a focus group; reporting; efficient strategies for planning the study; and emerging areas of focus group research, such as conducting cross-cultural, international, and Internet focus groups.

**Ward H, Atkins J. From their lives: *A manual on how to conduct focus groups of low-income parents*. Institute for Child and Family Policy, Edmund S. Muskie School of Public Health, Faculty and Staff Books, University of Southern Maine, 2002.**

This 93-page guide includes chapters on focus group basics, focus group documents, planning the focus group sessions, recruitment, how to conduct focus groups, and how to analyze and report findings. A pdf is available from this website: <http://digitalcommons.usm.maine.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1100&context=facbooks>

**OMNI. *Toolkit for Conducting Focus Groups*. USAID Center for Development Information and Evaluation. “*Conducting Focus Group Interviews*.” Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Tips. 1996** [**https://www.nyla.org/max/userfiles/Documents/D.\_Focus\_Group\_Toolkit.pdf**](https://www.nyla.org/max/userfiles/Documents/D._Focus_Group_Toolkit.pdf)

This practical guide describes “research basics” on conducting focus groups, and detailed methods on how to facilitate focus groups, including how to plan for and conduct them, handling difficult situations, and guidelines for note taking. It also includes some sample forms (consent, sign in).