FOCUS GROUPS

A Feminist Method

Sue Wilkinson
Loughborough University

Focus groups are little used in feminist psychology, despite their method-ological advantages. Following a brief introduction to the method, the article details three key ways in which the use of focus groups addresses the feminist critique of traditional methods in psychology. Focus groups are relatively naturalistic and so avoid the charge of artificiality; they offer social contexts for meaning-making and so avoid the charge of decontextualization; and they shift the balance of power away from the researcher toward the research participants and so avoid the charge of exploitation. The final section of the article, which evaluates the potential of focus groups for feminist research, identifies some other benefits of the method and also discusses some problems in the current use of focus groups. It concludes that the use—and development—of focus group methods offer feminist psychology an excellent opportunity for the future.

A family group, gathered around the TV in their living room, argues over a favorite soap opera; teenage girls sprawled over tables in a classroom swap stories about sexual harassment in high school; women waiting for appointments in a family planning clinic discuss methods of contraception—these are all potential focus group scenarios. A focus group is—at its simplest—"an informal discussion among selected individuals about specific topics" (Beck, Trombetta, & Share, 1986, p. 73). Researchers using focus groups typically organize and run a series of small, focused, group discussions and analyze the resulting data using a range of conventional qualitative techniques. As a research method, focus groups are similar to one-to-one interviews, except that they involve more than one participant per data collection

221

session; indeed, they are sometimes described as focus group interviews, group interviews, or group depth interviews.

Although focus groups are widely used in some fields, particularly in applied areas—such as communication/media studies (e.g., Lunt & Livingstone, 1996), education (e.g., Vaughn, Schumm, & Sinagub, 1996), and health care (e.g., Brems & Griffiths, 1993)—few feminists (and even fewer feminist psychologists) use the method. This article makes the case for the value of focus groups in feminist psychology and in feminist research more generally. As such, it is a contribution to the continuing feminist debate on methodology, both within psychology (e.g., Marecek, 1989; Morawski, 1994; Peplau & Conrad, 1989; Wilkinson, 1986) and beyond it (e.g., Bowles & Klein, 1983; Fonow & Cook, 1991; Harding, 1987; Stanley & Wise, 1993; Westkott, 1979). This debate considers not only the pros and cons of different methods of data collection, but also the ways in which methodological issues are intrinsically conceptual ones (cf. Unger, 1983). The design and conduct of a research project, the questions that are asked, the methods of data collection, the type of analysis that takes place, the perceived implications or utility of that analysis—all of these necessarily incorporate particular assumptions, models, and values. As Jeanne Marecek (1989, p. 370) noted, "a method is an interpretation." The choice of one method over another is not simply a technical decision, but an epistemological and theoretical one. This means that, as feminists considering the use of innovative or unusual methods, we need (as much as with conventional methods) to be aware of the epistemological commitments and value assumptions they make (Riger, 1992). In this article, I introduce focus group method; I then highlight the particular advantages of focus group method for feminist researchers; finally, I evaluate the potential of focus group method for feminist research.

INTRODUCING FOCUS GROUPS

As the authors of a key text on focus groups pointed out, "what is known as a focus group today takes many different forms" (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990, p. 9), but centrally it involves one or more group discussions in which participants focus collectively on a topic selected by the researcher and presented to them in the form of a film, a collection of advertisements, a vignette to discuss, a "game" to play, or simply a particular set of questions. The groups (rarely more than 12 people at a time and more commonly 6 to 8) can consist of either preexisting clusters of people (e.g., family members, Khan & Manderson, 1992; work colleagues, J. Kitzinger, 1994a, 1994b) or people drawn together specifically for the research. Many aspects of focus groups (e.g., the selection of participants, the setting in which they meet, the role of the moderator, the specific focus of the group, the structure of the discussion) are discussed in detail in the various "how to" books that address this method (e.g., Krueger, 1988; Morgan, 1988, 1993; Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990; Vaughn et al., 1996), and I will not rehearse such discussions here. Discussions between group participants, usually audiotaped (sometimes videotaped) and transcribed, constitute the data, and methods of qualitative analysis (ranging from conventional content analysis to rhetorical or discursive techniques) are generally employed. The method is distinctive not for its mode of analysis but for its data

collection procedures. Crucially—and many commentators on the method make this point—focus groups involve the interaction of group participants with each other as well as with the researcher/moderator, and it is the collection of this kind of interactive data that distinguishes the focus group from the one-to-one interview (cf. J. Kitzinger, 1994a; Morgan, 1988).

In general, focus group method is well suited to exploratory, interpretive, multi-method, and phenomenological research questions (Frey & Fontana, 1993). In considering whether to use focus groups, two leading experts (Morgan & Krueger, 1993) suggested that the researcher should take into account not only the purpose of the study, but also the appropriateness of group discussion as a format, the match between researchers' and participants' interests, and the type of results required. In conducting a focus group study, the researcher must make critical decisions about the following key parameters, all of which fundamentally affect the design and analysis of the study: the type of participants and the number of groups to be conducted, the topic or activity on which the groups are to focus; the conduct of the sessions; recording and transcription issues; and the analytic frame to be employed (see Knodel, 1993, for a useful summary discussion of design issues).

Although social psychologist Emory Bogardus (1926) used group interviews in developing his social distance scale, the invention of the focus group is usually attributed to sociologist Robert Merton, who, along with his colleagues Patricia Kendall and Marjorie Fiske, developed a group approach ("the focussed group-interview") to elicit information from audiences about their responses to radio programs (Merton & Kendall, 1946; Merton, Fiske, & Kendall, 1956). The method is most widely used within the fields of business and marketing (Goldman & McDonald, 1987), and it is only in the past five years or so that it has been described as "gaining some popularity among social scientists" (Fontana & Frey, 1994, p. 364), so the current "resurgence of interest" (Lunt & Livingstone, 1996, p. 79) in focus groups is a recent phenomenon. Focus groups have not been widely used in psychology, in part because "they did not fit the positivist criteria extant in the dominant research paradigm" (Harrison & Barlow, 1995, p. 11). The method rarely appears in texts of psychological research methods (although for recent exceptions see Millward, 1995; Vaughn et al., 1996), nor is it often cited in feminist research methods texts. (For an exception see Reinharz, 1992. But even here there are only two paragraphs on focus groups, and the author cites just one focus group study by a feminist psychologist—and that in an unpublished dissertation.)

Despite half a century (or more) of focus group research, feminist psychologists' use of the method seems to have begun only during the 1990s. Such focus group research includes work on men talking about sex (Crawford, Kippax, & Waldby, 1994) and about unemployment (Willott & Griffin, 1997); immigrant/refugee women exploring sexuality and gender-related issues (Espin, 1995); and sorority women talking about the threat of sexual aggression (Norris, Nurius, & Dimeff, 1996). In particular, feminist psychologists at the beginning of their careers seem to be drawn to focus groups as a research method: under the heading of student "work in progress," see Barringer's (1992) work with incest survivors, Lampon's (1995) study of lesbians' perceptions of safer sex practices, and Raabe's (1993) research on young people's identities. There are, of course, other feminist psychologists who rely on conversations between groups of participants as a means of data

collection but do not use the term "focus groups" or rely on the literature associated with this method. Michelle Fine's research with groups of girls (e.g., Fine, 1992; Fine & Addelston, 1996; Macpherson & Fine, 1995) is an example of such group work; others include Billinghurst (1996), Erkut, Fields, Sing, and Marx (1996), Kissling (1996), Lovering (1995), Walkerdine (1996), and Widdicombe (1995).

ADVANTAGES OF FOCUS GROUPS FOR FEMINIST RESEARCHERS

Feminist researchers have identified a range of problems inherent in traditional psychological methods (see, e.g., critiques by Jayaratne & Stewart, 1991; Reinharz, 1983). Central to such critiques are the artificiality of traditional psychological methods, their decontextualized nature, and the exploitative power relations between researcher and researched. These three problems are key to feminist critiques of traditional methods, and it is precisely these problems, I argue, that can be addressed through the use of focus groups.

Artificiality. Many feminist psychologists have been critical of data generated via experimental methods (e.g., Parlee, 1979; Sherif, 1979/1992) and by tests and scales (e.g., Lewin & Wild, 1991; Tavris, 1992), urging "the abandonment of the experiment as contextually sterile and trivial in favor of more qualitative methods that are closer to actual experience" (Lott, 1985, p. 151). Feminist researchers have argued that feminist methods should be naturalistic in the sense that they should tap into the usual "modes of communication" (Maynard, 1990, p. 275) and the "everyday social processes" (Graham, 1984, p. 113) that constitute people's social lives.

Decontextualization. From the beginning of second wave feminist psychology, researchers emphasized the importance of social context and insisted that feminist methods should be contextual: that is, they should avoid focusing on the individual devoid of social context or separate from interactions with others (e.g., Weisstein, 1968/1993). The "context-stripping" nature of experiments and surveys was criticized because, as Janis Bohan (1992, p. 13) stated, "the reality of human experience—namely that it always occurs in context— . . . is lost." Feminists (along with other critical social psychologists, e.g., Gergen, 1987; Prilleltensky, 1989; Sampson, 1988) have criticized psychology's individualism, proposing that the individual self may be characterized as "in connection" or "relational" (e.g., Jordan, Kaplan, Miller, Stiver, & Surrey, 1991; Taylor, Gilligan, & Sullivan, 1996) or seen primarily as a social construction, a cultural product of Western thought (e.g., C. Kitzinger, 1992; Lykes, 1985). "If you really want to know either of us," wrote Michelle Fine and Susan Gordon, then "do not put us in a laboratory, or hand us a survey, or even interview us separately alone in our homes. Watch me (MF) with women friends, my son, his father, my niece, or my mother and you will see what feels most authentic to me" (Fine & Gordon, 1989, p. 159). Other (social constructionist and postmodernist) critics have gone further in suggesting that human experience is constructed within specific social contexts. Collective sense is made, meanings negotiated, and identities elaborated through the processes of social interaction

between people (e.g., Hare-Mustin & Marecek, 1990; Morawski & Agronick, 1991; West & Zimmerman, 1987).

Exploitation. Feminist psychologists have criticized the extent to which the interests and concerns of research participants are subordinated to those of the researcher and the way in which people are transformed into "object-like subjects" (Unger, 1983, p. 149) and have castigated the traditional hierarchy of power relations between researcher and researched (e.g., Campbell & Schram, 1995, p. 88; Peplau & Conrad, 1989, p. 386). In feminist research, "respecting the experience and perspective of the other" (Worell & Etaugh, 1994, p. 444) is key. Many feminist researchers express commitment to "realizing as fully as possible women's voices in data gathering and preparing an account that transmits those voices" (Olesen, 1994, p. 167), suggesting that feminist research is characterized by "non-hierarchical relations" (Seibold, Richards, & Simon, 1994, p. 395), and evaluating research methods (at least partly) in terms of their adequacy in enabling feminist researchers to engage in "a more equal and reciprocal relationship with their informants" (Graham, 1984, p. 113).

These three problems—artificiality, decontextualization, and exploitation—in conjunction have led feminist researchers frequently to advocate qualitative approaches, even to suggest that these are "quintessentially feminist" (Maynard & Purvis, 1994, p. 3). I will not rehearse here the arguments for the use—or particular merits—of qualitative methods in feminist research, as these have been well documented elsewhere (see, e.g., Griffin, 1985; Henwood & Pidgeon, 1995; Marshall, 1986; Reinharz, 1983). Rather, I will demonstrate the particular value of focus groups as a qualitative feminist method.

Avoiding Artificiality: Focus Groups are a Relatively "Naturalistic" Method

The claim that focus groups are "naturalistic" (or "ecologically valid") is commonplace in the focus group literature (e.g., Albrecht, Johnson, & Walther, 1993, p. 54; Liebes, 1984, p. 47). Focus groups avoid the artificiality of many psychological methods because they draw on people's normal, everyday experiences of talking and arguing with families, friends, and colleagues about events and issues in their everyday lives. It is exactly this ordinary social process that is tapped by focus group method. Everyday topics about which focus groups are invited to talk might include drinking behaviors (Beck et al., 1987), sexual decision making (Zeller, 1993), labor and birth experiences (DiMatteo, Kahn, & Berry, 1993), buying a new car (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990), coping with marriage breakdown (Hamon & Thiessen, 1990), and experiences of friends' and acquaintances' heart attacks (Morgan & Spanish, 1984). As focus group textbook author Richard Krueger (1988, p. 44) noted, people are "social creatures who interact with others," who are "influenced by the comments of others," and who "make decisions after listening to the advice and counsel of people around them." Focus groups tap into the "natural" processes of communication, such as arguing, joking, boasting, teasing, persuasion, challenge, and disagreement. Robin Jarrett (1993, p. 194) described her focus groups with young women

as having "the feel of rap sessions with friends. The atmosphere was exuberantly boisterous and sometimes frank in language."

Feminist researchers who have used focus groups have typically commented favorably on the extent to which they mirror everyday social interchange in a relatively naturalistic way. A study of female friends' talk about abortion involved groups of friends meeting to watch an episode of the TV program *Cagney & Lacey* in the home of one of their members, which "provided a fairly naturalistic environment for television viewing" (Press, 1991, p. 423). Feminist psychologist Kathryn Lovering (1995), in talking about menstruation with young people at school, found that group discussions provided a context for a "relatively naturalistic conversational exchange" (p. 16)—in this case characterized by a great deal of "embarrassment" and "giggling" (pp. 22–23). In discussing these topics, participants draw on the modes of interaction, communication, and expression common in their everyday lives.

Many focus groups use preexisting or naturally occurring social groups such as friendship groups (e.g., Liebes, 1984), work colleagues (e.g., J. Kitzinger, 1994a, 1994b), family members (e.g., Khan & Manderson, 1992), members of clubs (J. Kitzinger, 1994a, 1994b), or simply "people who have experienced the same problem, such as residents of a deteriorating neighborhood or women in a sexist organization" (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 139). According to focus group researcher Jenny Kitzinger (1994a), in a study of the effects of media messages about AIDS:

> By using pre-existing groups we were sometimes able to tap into fragments of interactions which approximated to 'naturally-occurring' data. . . . The fact that research participants already knew each other had the additional advantage that friends and colleagues could relate each others' comments to actual incidents in their shared daily lives. (p. 105)

Feminist researchers have also drawn on people who already know each other in setting up their groups. Heterosexual college women from sorority houses at a large west coast university in the United States were invited (together with a friend) to attend group meetings to discuss the perceived threat of sexual aggression from fraternity acquaintances (Norris et al., 1996). In another project, the participants themselves decided to bring along their best friends, which worked well for the group: "The best friend pairings ensured that each girl had a familiar audience and, as it turned out, a critical one; challenges came only from the friend at first, uncritical questions came from the other girls" (Macpherson & Fine, 1995, p. 182). Participants who know each other may recall common experiences, share half-forgotten memories, or challenge each other on contradictions between what they are professing to believe in the group and what they might have said or done outside the group ("What about the other day when you . . . ?"; "But last night you said . . . !").

The value of having people who know each other as participants in a focus group is illustrated in the following exchange between Marlene and Rebecca, two members of a focus group asked to discuss a television drama dealing with abortion as a moral issue. In the following extract, the interviewer apparently misunderstands Marlene's initial response to a question (hearing "eloquent" as "awkward") and

subsequently seeks clarification of her referent. Rebecca intervenes with a shared memory, which both she and Marlene understand as contradicting Marlene's earlier statement:

Interviewer:	So what did you think? In general.
Marlene:	Parts of it were kind of unrealistic. . . . I think the pro-life people. . . . They're not that eloquent and I don't think they're that knowledgeable.
Interviewer:	Not that awkward . . .
Marlene:	Eloquent . . . and not that knowledgeable and also every . . .
Interviewer:	The pro-life people?
Marlene:	Yeah . . . and everyone I've talked to basically told me a lie, so . . .
Rebecca:	But remember the um, the false clinic that we went to . . .
Marlene:	. . . that one woman . . .
Rebecca:	That one woman was so eloquent. (Press, 1991, p. 432)

In this extract, Rebecca contrasts the material in the TV drama with an actual experience, which Marlene shared, and their joint memories of this particular experience provoke a detailed discussion typical of what can occur when participants already know each other.

In sum, focus groups enable feminist research to be "naturalistic" insofar as they mirror the processes of communication in everyday social interaction. This is particularly the case when group members are friends or already acquainted and/ or when they are discussing topics or issues within the range of their everyday experiences. Focus groups themselves are not, of course, "natural" (in the sense of spontaneously arising). They are facilitated by a researcher for research purposes. There are debates within the literature about the extent to which they may be considered "naturalistic" (see, e.g., Morgan, 1993). However, the interactions that take place within focus groups are closer to everyday social processes than those afforded by most other research methods. The use of focus groups allows feminist researchers to better meet the feminist research objective of avoiding artificiality.

Avoiding Decontextualization: Focus Groups are Social Contexts for Meaning-Making

A focus group participant is not an individual acting in isolation. Rather, participants are members of a social group, all of whom interact with each other. In other words, the focus group is itself a social context. As David Morgan, a leading focus group researcher, emphasized: "The hallmark of focus groups is *the explicit use of group interaction to produce data and insights that would be less accessible without the interaction found in a group*" (Morgan, 1988, p. 12; his emphasis). These social interactions among participants constitute the primary data.

The interactive data generated by focus groups are based on the premise that "all talk through which people generate meaning is contextual" (Dahlgren, 1988, p. 292). The social context of the focus group provides an opportunity to examine how people engage in generating meaning, how opinions are formed, expressed, and (sometimes) modified within the context of discussion and debate with others.

As Jenny Kitzinger (1994b, pp. 170–171) pointed out, in focus group discussions, meanings are constantly negotiated and renegotiated:

> Participants do not just agree with each other, they also misunderstand one another, question one another, try to persuade each other of the justice of their own point of view and sometimes they vehemently disagree. . . . Such unexpected dissent [can lead] them to clarify why they thought as they did, often identifying aspects of their personal experience which had altered their opinions or specific occasions which had made them rethink their point of view. . . . People's different assumptions are thrown into relief by the way in which they challenge one another, the questions they ask, the sources they cite, and which explanations seem to sway the opinion of other members of the group.

In the focus group, people take differing individual experiences and attempt to make "collective sense" of them (Morgan & Spanish, 1984, p. 259). It is this process of collective sense-making that occurs through the interactions among focus group participants.

In individual interviews, the interaction is between the interviewer and a single interviewee; in focus groups, "a multitude of interpersonal dynamics occur," through interactions people change their views, and "the unit of analysis becomes the group" (Crabtree, Yanoshik, Miller, & O'Connor, 1993, p. 144). Focus groups not only provide a context for the collection of interactive data, but also offer "*the opportunity to observe directly the group process*. In the individual interview respondents *tell* how they would or did behave in a particular social situation. In the group interview, respondents react to each other, and their behavior is directly *observed*" (Goldman, 1962, p. 62, his emphasis). An example of the way in which group processes can become a key part of the analysis is found in Michael Billig's (1992) work on talk about the British Royal Family. One of Billig's concerns is the way people construct others as gullible and uncritical consumers of the media; they are used as "contrastive others" to illustrate the speaker's own critical powers and thereby enhance his or her own identity. Billig described a group discussion among four people, aged between 59 and 66 and all related, plus the mother of one of them, aged 87, whose "contributions to the conversation were often interruptions, as she told jokes or reminisced about poverty before the war. She even broke into song once: "I'm 'Enery the Eighth I am," she sang. For periods, she remained mute, while the not-so-elderly got on with their nimble conversational business" (Billig, 1992, p. 159). It is this woman who is constructed as the gullible other by her relatives. Billig analyzed the interactive mechanisms through which this othering (cf. Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 1996) is achieved. In his presentation of the data, one can see the process of othering at work and how the elaboration of the speaker's own identity depends on the interactive production of this contrastive other. (For a more extended discussion of the way in which Billig's analysis has made full use of the group interaction, see Wilkinson, 1998a.) Focus groups, then, offer the researcher the opportunity to observe directly the coconstruction of meaning in a social context via the interactions of group participants.

The few feminist researchers who have used focus groups (and other kinds of group work) have similarly taken advantage of the method to illustrate how argu-

ments are developed and identities elaborated in a group context, typically through challenge and provocation from other members of the group. For example, after viewing a televised reconstruction of the rape and murder of a young female hitchhiker, one participant in Schlesinger, Dobash, Dobash, and Weaver's (1992, p. 146) research responds to another member of the focus group (who had expressed the opinion that the hitchhiker "was leading them on . . . the way she was dancing and her clothes as well . . . her top, her shirt") with the unequivocal statement: "Her clothes have got nothing to do with it." She adds, "I didn't want to say anything because my views are totally clear on this . . . ," and she then expounds them at some length. The provocation of the earlier speaker ensured that this woman's views were elicited and elaborated. Other examples of this include a (self-identified) "upper class" teenage girl, whose remarks imply that the behavior of the working class is responsible for the problems of the class system and who is challenged by other discussion group members to defend this view (Frazer, 1988, p. 349), and female students in an elite law school, who elaborate their experiences of profound alienation (and support each other in so doing) in the context of provocation from a male student who refers to "making a mountain out of a molehill" (Fine & Addelston, 1996, pp. 131–132).

The elaboration of meaning and identity through group interaction is also evident in an over-dinner group, in which "the text of conversation co-created by we six" (Macpherson & Fine, 1995, p. 181) is used to elaborate racial/ethnic differences among the participants. Janet (described by the authors as "Korean American") is challenged by Shermika, when she refers to African Americans at her school:

Shermika: I don't consider myself no African-American.
Janet: That's the acceptable politically correct . . .
Shermika: I'm full American, I've never been to Africa.
Janet: Are you black or wh[ite] . . . African-American? (Sorry.)
[Janet inadvertently repeated the "black or white" dichotomy that Shermika had announced was excluding Janet.]
Shermika: I'm neither one.
Michelle: What racial group do you consider yourself?
Shermika: Negro. Not black, not African-American. That's just like saying all white people come from Europe. Why don't you call 'em Europe-American? (Macpherson & Fine, 1995, pp. 188–189)

Here, Shermika is defending and elaborating her identity (as "full American" and as "Negro") in the context of a challenge from a group member. Janet's challenge also leads Shermika to explain her reasons for these identity label choices ("I've never been to Africa"). This exchange then prompts Janet to elaborate her own identity, creating her own differences from Shermika.

In sum, then, feminist focus group researchers have shown how the social context of the focus group offers the opportunity to observe the coconstruction of meaning and the elaboration of identities through interaction. The interactive nature of focus group data produces insights that would not be available outside the group context (although there is disappointingly little evidence of sophisticated analyses by feminists of such interactive data). This emphasis on the person in context makes the focus group an ideal method for feminist psychologists who see the self as

relational or as socially constructed and who argue, therefore, that feminist methods should be contextual.

Avoiding Exploitation: Focus Groups Shift the Balance of Power

Focus groups inevitably reduce the researcher's power and control. Simply by virtue of the number of research participants simultaneously involved in the research interaction, the balance of power shifts away from the researcher. The researcher's influence is "diffused by the very fact of being in a group rather than a one-to-one situation" (Frey & Fontana, 1993, p. 26). As the aim of a focus group is to provide opportunities for a relatively free-flowing and interactive exchange of views, it is less amenable to the researcher's influence, compared with a one-to-one interview. Focus groups place "control over [the] interaction in the hands of the participants rather than the researcher" (Morgan, 1988, p. 18).

In direct contrast to the goals of most feminist researchers, the reduced power and control of the researcher is typically identified as a disadvantage of the method in the mainstream focus group literature. As Richard Krueger, a leading handbook author, lamented:

> the researcher has less control in the group interview as compared to the individual interview. The focus group interview allows the participants to influence and interact with each other, and, as a result, group members are able to influence the course of the discussion. This sharing of group control results in some inefficiencies such as detours in the discussion, and the raising of irrelevant issues. (Krueger, 1988, p. 46)

Similarly, other researchers have warned that the potential of groups to "usurp the moderator" (Watts & Ebbutt, 1987, p. 32) may lead to "relatively chaotic data collection" (Kvale, 1996, p. 101). The reassertion of control over focus group participants is seen as a management issue and is addressed by many of the "how to" books on focus groups, which offer advice for dealing with individual "problem" participants who do not behave in line with the researcher's requirements (e.g., Krueger, 1988; Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990; Vaughn et al., 1996). One focus group expert offered detailed instructions for maintaining power over participants in a section headed "Pest Control" (Wells, 1974). Moderator training is seen as essential and typically focuses around "leadership" issues. According to the handbooks, such training should enable the moderator to take "the role of nominal leader" (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990, p. 70) and to exercise "a mild, unobtrusive control over the group" (Krueger, 1988, p. 73).

With this emphasis on the moderator's role, the issue of power and control in interactions among group members is rarely addressed, either as a feature of focus group method or even as a management issue for the moderator/researcher. A rare exception is a footnoted comment on the researcher's ethical obligation to deal with offensive comments, bullying, or intimidation directed at other group members (J. Kitzinger, 1994a, p. 118), also suggesting how this may be done (e.g., by considering group composition in advance, by using dissent within the group to challenge offensive remarks, or by direct intervention to silence or move on the discussion). In general, the more subtle exercise of power relations among group members (e.g.,

apparent collusion in constructing a particular argument or silencing a particular member) is rarely made explicit and is addressed in the focus group literature only insofar as it can be reduced to a "problem" generated by an individual group member and "solved" by direct intervention of the researcher. Billig's (1992, p. 159) demonstration of the process by which a family constructs its oldest member as the gullible other is therefore an unusual exception (although note that the researcher appears here only as recorder/analyst, not as a participant in the group interaction).

Some researchers do recognize that the reduction in the researcher's influence in focus groups can be seen as an advantage. David Morgan (1988, p. 18) pointed out that "participants' interaction among themselves replaces their interaction with the interviewer, leading to a greater emphasis on participants' points of view." Focus groups are sometimes presented as an opportunity for "listening to local voices" (Murray, Tapson, Turnbull, McCallum, & Little, 1994), for learning the participants' own language instead of imposing the researcher's language on them (Bers, 1987; Freimuth & Greenberg, 1986; Mays et al., 1992), and for gaining an insight into participants' conceptual worlds (Broom & Dozier, 1990). Focus groups can allow participants much greater opportunity to set the research agenda and to "develop the themes most important to them" (Cooper, Diamond, & High, 1993), which may diverge from those identified by the researcher. Compared with a one-to-one interview, it is much harder for the researcher to impose his or her own agenda in the group context.

The relative lack of power and control held by the researcher in the focus group allows the participants to challenge each other (Jarrett, 1993) and to challenge—or even to undermine—the researcher, insisting on their own interpretations and agendas being heard in place of the formal requirements of the research project. The following exchange is taken from the first few minutes of a focus group session in which the moderator (a 45-year-old man) attempts to set the agenda for the discussion. The participants are 18- and 19-year-old women:

Moderator:	The discussion is on sexual decision making and interpersonal relationships between those of the female and those of male arrangements. Tomorrow night, we are talking to the guys to see what their view of this thing is.
Participant:	I'd like to listen to that. [laughter]
Moderator:	There is every reason to believe that . . .
Participant:	[Like] Oprah Winfrey! [laughter]
Moderator:	There is every reason to believe that girls and guys see sex differently.
Participant:	I can tell you that right now. [laughter] (Zeller, 1993, pp. 174–175)

The interruptions, laughter, jokes, badinage, and cryptic comments of the participants cut across and over the formal introduction attempted by this moderator. The apparent attempt to set particular discussion topics is undermined by the young women, who frivolously compare his agenda to that of a popular TV program or who imply that his (rather pompously presented) hypotheses are simply self-evident ("I can tell you that right now"). In this extract the participants are—collaboratively—taking control over the process of context-setting and hence contribut-

ing to the determination of the subsequent course and nature of this discussion. (To be fair, this author does acknowledge the advantages of this process.)

Focus group researchers, then, are virtually unanimous that, compared with many other methods of data collection (especially the one-to-one interview), focus groups reduce the researcher's influence. For some (e.g., Krueger, 1988), this is a disadvantage that, although offset by the numerous advantages of the method, needs careful management. For others (e.g., Morgan, 1988), it is an advantage that enables participants to contribute to setting the research agenda, resulting in better access to their opinions and conceptual worlds. But, whether identified as a problem or a benefit, researchers concur on the relative lack of power held by the focus group researcher.

The few feminists who have used focus groups (and other kinds of group work) have similarly emphasized the shift in the balance of power—and particularly the extent to which the method enables research participants to speak in their own voice—to express their own thoughts and feelings and to determine their own agendas. In a recent article in the *Psychology of Women Quarterly,* Jeanette Norris et al. (1996, p. 129) claimed that: "Within feminist research, focus groups have been used to provide a 'voice' to the research participant by giving her an opportunity to define what is relevant and important to understand her experience." Feminist psychologist Oliva Espin (1995, p. 228), using focus groups in her exploration of immigrant/refugee women's understandings of sexuality and their internalization of cultural norms, commented that the method's "open-ended narratives allow for the expression of thoughts and feelings while inviting participants to introduce their own themes and concepts." Similarly, in a study of women's reactions to violent episodes on television, Schlesinger et al. (1992, p. 29) saw the group discussions as an opportunity for women to "determine their own agendas as much as possible." (See also Griffin (1986) and Frazer (1988) for examples of how group discussions led the researcher to change the research questions to address participants' concerns better.)

The following exchange arises in response to a (young, female) researcher's request to her focus group participants for examples of the excuses they use to avoid sex. Three young, heterosexual women (Lara, Cath, and Helen), challenge the researcher's implication that young women have to find excuses to avoid having sex with their male partners:

Cath:	Do you mean like really naff excuses?
Researcher:	Well, anything that you would use.
Lara:	But I mean. . . .
Cath:	But it depends how far you've got because that can go completely . . .
Helen:	No, but . . . no, but that just gives you a few days respite doesn't it?—and then I think that after a few days you'd just feel so shitty that you had to rely on that.
Lara:	That's horrible, why should you have to lie on an issue that is just perfectly right and you feel strongly about, why do you have to come up with excuses?
Cath:	That's right.
Lara:	I mean, I would much rather, it would be so nice just to be able to say no, for no particular reason. I don't really know, I haven't felt the need to think about it, I just don't particularly fancy it.

| Helen: | I just don't feel like it at the moment. |
| Lara: | Wouldn't that be nice! (Frith, 1997) |

Although these young women are evidently able to generate excuses to avoid sex, they reject the idea that this is an appropriate question for the researcher to be asking or a desirable action in which to be engaged.

In sum, feminist focus group researchers recognize that focus groups shift the balance of power and control toward the research participants, enabling them to assert their own interpretations and agendas. Despite the disadvantages of this in some contexts (particularly when researching powerful—e.g., male—groups; cf. Green, Barbour, Bernard, & Kitzinger, 1993), this reduction in the relative power of the researcher also allows the researcher to access better, understand, and take account of the opinions and conceptual worlds of research participants, in line with the suggested principles of feminist research.

THE POTENTIAL OF FOCUS GROUPS FOR FEMINIST RESEARCH

As I have shown, the particular advantages of focus groups for feminist research are that they are relatively "naturalistic," that they offer a social context for meaning-making; and that they shift the balance of power away from the researcher toward the research participants. In this manner, focus groups meet the concerns of feminist researchers to avoid the problems of artificiality, decontextualization, and exploitative power relations. There are also other ways in which focus group method may benefit feminist research: for example, in the appropriateness of focus groups for use with underrepresented and severely disadvantaged social groups, their value for action research, and the role of focus groups in consciousness-raising.

Work with underrepresented social groups. Some focus group researchers have suggested that focus groups may be particularly useful for accessing the views of those who have been poorly served by traditional research:

> Social research has not done well in reaching people who are isolated by the daily exhausting struggles for survival, services and dignity—people who will not respond to surveys or whose experiences, insights and feelings lie outside the range of data survey methods. These people are also uncomfortable with individual interviews. We found that almost all elements in the community could be accessed in the safe and familiar context of their own turf, relations and organizations through focus groups. (Plaut, Landis, & Trevor, 1993, p. 216)

Focus group participants have included, for example, difficult-to-reach, high-risk families in an inner city (Lengua et al., 1992); Black gay men (Mays et al., 1992), the elderly (Chapman & Johnson, 1995), and village women in rural counties of China (Wong, Li, Burris, & Xiang, 1995). Such use of focus groups is in line with the proposal that feminist research should pay particular attention to the needs of "those who [have] little or no societal voice" (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 36), and feminist focus group researchers have similarly used the method in researching the lives of immigrant/refugee women (Espin, 1995) and urban African American preadolescents and young adolescents living in poverty (Vera, Reese, Paikoff, & Jarrett, 1996).

Action research. Some focus group researchers have suggested that the method "has promise in action research" (Vaughn et al., 1996, p. 32), that it can be used radically "to empower and to foster social change" (Johnson, 1996, p. 536). For example, Raymond Padilla (1993) described a project to overcome barriers to the success of Hispanic students in a U.S. community college, based on the work of Brazilian educator Paulo Friere. He used focus groups as a "dialogical method" to empower research subjects to change their own lives as part of "a larger project of political freedom, cultural autonomy, and liberation from oppressive economic and social conditions" (p. 154). It is the project's intent that

> By critically examining through dialogue the problematic aspects of their own lives, the subjects are able to gain the critical understanding that is necessary to identify viable alternatives to existing social arrangements and to take appropriate actions to change and improve their own lives. (Padilla, 1993, p. 154)

Some feminists have also wanted their research to have direct practical effects in women's lives and have used focus groups (and other kinds of group work) in action research projects. For example, Maria Mies (1983), in a project aiming to make practical provision for battered women, insisted that, in order to implement a nonhierarchical egalitarian research process, to ensure that research serves the interests of the oppressed, to develop political awareness, and to use her own relative power in the interests of other women, "interviews of individuals . . . must be shifted towards group discussions, if possible at repeated intervals" (p. 128). Mies' view is that "this collectivization of women's experience . . . helps women to overcome their structural isolation in their families and to understand that their individual sufferings have social causes" (p. 128). Similarly, Jean Orr's (1992) project on Well Women Clinics "encourages members to see that problems are often not caused by personal inadequacy but are based in current social structure" (p. 32), offering "support to members in changing aspects of their lives" and enabling them to "feel confident in asserting their needs to others" (p. 32) within the Community Health Movement and beyond. (Further examples of the use of focus groups in feminist action research on health issues may be found in de Koning & Martin's (1996) edited collection.)

Consciousness-raising. The similarities between focus group discussions and the consciousness-raising sessions common in the early years of second wave feminism have fueled the interest of several feminist researchers. Noting that it was through consciousness raising that Lynn Farley (1978) came to identify and name the experience of "sexual harassment," feminist sociologist Carrie Herbert (1989) included group discussions in her work with young women on their experience of sexual harassment. Similarly, Michelle Fine (1992, p. 173), chronicling a set of group discussions with adolescent girls, claimed that "through a feminist methodology we call 'collective consciousness work,' we sculpted . . . a way to theorize consciousness, moving from stridently individualist feminism to a collective sense of women's solidarity among difference." Feminist researchers using focus group work in this way (cf. Mies, 1983; Orr, 1992) hope that, through meeting together with others and sharing experience and through realizing group commonalities in what had

previously been considered individual and personal problems, women will develop a clearer sense of the social and political processes through which their experiences are constructed and perhaps also a desire to organize against them.It has to be said, however, that other researchers using focus groups are less sanguine about their consciousness raising potential. Jenny Kitzinger's (1994a) focus groups' discussions of HIV risk offer salutary counterexamples of the alleged consciousness raising benefit of group discussion. In several groups, she said, "any attempt to address the risks HIV poses to gay men were drowned out by a ritual period of outcry against homosexuality" (J. Kitzinger, 1994a, p. 108).

Given the advantages of focus groups, it is perhaps surprising that they are not more widely used by feminist researchers. Among the qualitative methods available to feminists, the one-to-one interview is the most commonly used technique; according to some researchers (Kelly, Burton, & Regan, 1994, p. 34), it has become "the paradigmatic 'feminist method'." Many of the classic qualitative studies in feminist psychology use the one-to-one interview as their only or primary research tool (e.g., Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986; Chesler, 1972; Gilligan, 1982; Walker, 1979). Of the 77 empirical articles published in the first six volumes (1991–1996) of the international journal *Feminism & Psychology*, 43 (56%) used interviews, and no other qualitative method was used in more than 10% of studies. Over a similar period, *Psychology of Women Quarterly* published 25 studies using interviews, although these constituted a much smaller proportion of the total number of empirical articles (only 17%), with no other qualitative method used in more than 2% of studies. Focus groups were rarely used: in the same period, there were 8 focus group studies published in *F&P* and only 1 in *PWQ* (plus two studies that used group discussions).

I would suggest that there are many reported instances of the use of interviews in feminist research where focus groups could have met the researcher's aims better, provided fuller or more sophisticated answers to the research question, or addressed particular methodological concerns. For example, Niobe Way (1995) interviewed 12 girls individually to answer the question: "What are the various ways urban, poor, and working-class adolescent girls speak about themselves, their schools and their relationships to parents and peers over a three-year period?" (p. 109). Given the stated assumptions of this study, including that research is "inherently relational" (p. 109) and that "the words of adolescents cannot be separated from the cultural and societal context of which they are a part" (p. 109), it seems that focus groups might have been a better methodological choice. It is particularly surprising that the work of the Harvard Project on Women's Psychology and Girls' Development (e.g., Brown & Gilligan, 1983; Gilligan, 1982; Taylor et al., 1996), which theorizes the self as fundamentally "relational," relies almost exclusively on individual interviews with young women.

Finally, although it is a pity that there is not greater use of focus groups in feminist research, it is also a pity that there is not better use of focus groups, capitalizing on their particular advantages as a method. I will close by highlighting some of the main problems in the current use of focus groups (by feminists and others) and indicate the ways in which these could be overcome, in order to maximize the value of the method as a tool for feminist research. These problems are inappropriate use of focus groups, neglect of group interactions, and insufficient epistemological warranting. I will look briefly at each.

Inappropriate use of focus groups. Although the "how to" books include advice on "how not to" (and also "when not to") use focus groups (e.g., Morgan & Krueger, 1993; Vaughn et al., 1996), this advice is often disregarded, not least by feminist focus group researchers. For example, although the textbooks caution against using focus groups as a quick and easy way of increasing sample size, indicating that the method is unsuitable for conducting large-scale studies, it is not uncommon for researchers to present as their rationale for using focus groups that they are "effective and economical in terms of both time and money" (Espin, 1995, p. 228), or that they are "a means of gathering qualitative data from a relatively large sample" (Lampon, 1995, p. 171). Similarly, although the handbooks warn against inappropriate quantification of focus group data (cf. Morgan & Krueger, 1993, p. 14), this, too, is often apparent: for example, Geraghty (1980) offered a statistical profile of donors to a particular charity based on four focus groups, and Flexner, McLaughlin, and Littlefield (1977) presented a graph comparing three focus groups ("consumers," "potential consumers," and "providers" of abortion services) in terms of the average ranks given by members of each group to features of an abortion service. More recently, an article included in a special issue of *Qualitative Health Research* on "Issues and Applications of Focus Groups" (Carey, 1995) categorized the social service concerns of HIV-positive women and tabulated the number of responses coded under each category (Seals et al., 1995). This is despite at least two injunctions elsewhere in the special issue not to quantify focus group data.

Neglect of group interactions. Although interaction among group participants is supposed to be a defining characteristic of focus group methods, one review of over 40 published reports of focus group studies "could not find a single one concentrating on the conversation between participants and very few that even included any quotations from more than one participant at a time" (J. Kitzinger, 1994a, p. 104). For this article, I reviewed almost 200 focus group studies ranging in date of publication from 1946 to 1996, with the same result. Focus group data are most commonly presented as if they were one-to-one interview data, with interactions among group participants rarely reported, let alone analyzed. This is despite clear statements in the focus group literature that "researchers who use focus groups and do not attend to the impact of the group setting will incompletely or inappropriately analyze their data" (Carey & Smith, 1994, p. 125). The extracts quoted in this article are not, in fact, typical of the way in which focus group data are normally reported. I have deliberately sought out those rare published examples of interactive data in order to make the best possible case for the use of focus groups. In presenting these data extracts, I have often drawn attention to interactional features that are not commented on by the authors themselves. More commonly, the focus is on the content rather than the process of interaction. One wishes feminist focus group researchers were producing analyses of interactions approaching the sophistication of that offered by Billig (1992).

Insufficient epistemological warranting. In common with other types of qualitative data, data from focus groups are open to either essentialist or social constructionist interpretations (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; cf. also C. Kitzinger & Powell, 1995). For feminist researchers working within an essentialist frame, it may be the voices of individual women (speaking with, or in contradiction to, other women) that they wish to hear, and for them focus groups offer a valuable route to "the individual

in social context" (Goldman, 1962; Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 95). These researchers may well argue that focus group data are more "authentic" or "closer to the essential meanings of women's lives" than data elicited by other methods. Within a social constructionist (or postmodernist or discursive) frame, however, focus group data are just as constructed—albeit differently—as, say, responses to an opinion poll or behavior in a laboratory setting. Viewed within this frame, the method offers access to "the patterns of talk and interaction through which the members of any group constitute a shared reality" (Devault, 1990, p. 97). The analytic emphasis is on the construction and negotiation of persons and events, the functions served by different discourses, and—for feminists—the ways in which social inequalities are produced and perpetuated through talk (cf. Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 1995, for further examples of this approach). However, focus group researchers rarely offer a clear epistemological warrant for the interpretation of their data, and there is a great deal of slippage between essentialist and social constructionist frames.

In conclusion, this article has argued that focus groups offer considerable potential for the future development of feminist research in and beyond psychology in ways congruent with feminist goals. I do not embrace the orthodoxy that qualitative methods are "quintessentially feminist" (Maynard & Purvis, 1994, p. 3), nor do I believe that any particular method can be designated feminist per se (cf. Wilkinson, 1986, p. 14). Indeed, as Peplau and Conrad (1989, p. 379) observed, "no method comes with a feminist guarantee." Following Peplau and Conrad (1989), I do not seek to define feminist research in psychology primarily at the methodological level but rather to evaluate a particular method—the focus group—in terms of its usefulness in the pursuit of feminist goals. Within this context, I have shown that focus groups are a valuable method for feminist research because they meet three key feminist goals: they enable relatively "naturalistic" research, give due account to social context, and shift the balance of power in research. They are also useful in work with underrepresented groups, in action research, and in consciousness-raising.

In order to realize the potential of focus groups as a research method, however, feminist researchers could develop a better awareness of the appropriate uses of focus groups and the functions they can—and cannot—serve. In general, focus group method is well suited to research questions involving the elicitation and clarification of perspectives, the construction and negotiation of meanings, the generation and elaboration of hypotheses, and a whole range of exploratory analyses. It is poorly suited to research questions involving the estimation of frequencies, the testing of causal relationships, generalizations to larger populations, comparisons between population groups, and most types of inferential analysis. It would also be useful for feminist researchers to pay more attention to the interactive nature of focus groups, reporting and analyzing interactions among group participants in ways that do justice to their role in meaning-making. Finally, feminist researchers could more clearly identify the epistemological frameworks that inform their interpretations of focus group data in order to warrant the particular analyses they present.

It is true that, at present, focus groups are not widely used by feminist psychologists, perhaps because, as Jill Morawski (1994, pp. 21–22) stated, "Attempts to study women's experiences that take seriously the transindividual, contextually embedded, or socially constructed nature of those experiences risk using methodolo-

gies that are appropriate to their mandate but that fail to meet orthodox standards of the science." We have, as psychologists, undergone training within a discipline that has "placed a high value on quantification and imbued us with suspicion of alternative methods and non-positivistic science" (Mednick, 1991, p. 618). If, however, as feminist psychologists we agree on "the need for more interactive, contextualized methods in the service of emancipatory goals" (Riger, 1992, p. 736), then feminist psychology needs to be bolder in its challenge to the orthodoxies of the discipline. It needs to harness "varied epistemological forces from empiricism and materialism to utopianism and postmodernism, in order to construct *feminist science*" (Morawski & Agronick, 1991, p. 575, my emphasis), and it needs to demonstrate a commitment to "developing and testing innovative concepts, methods and applications for understanding and empowering women" (Russo, 1995, p. 1). The continued use and further development of focus group method offer feminist psychology an excellent opportunity for the future.

ENDNOTE

I am delighted to report that the field of focus group research has developed considerably since this article was accepted for publication. Second editions of several of the classic handbooks have appeared, as well as a number of new texts. There is now a growing body of feminist focus group research, and some of the researchers referenced in this article (e.g. Niobe Way, members of the Harvard Project) have moved from exclusive reliance on one-to-one interviews to include group discussions in their work. More up-to-date reviews of the field have also been published, including two of my own, on the use of focus groups in health research (Wilkinson, 1998b) and across the social sciences (Wilkinson, 1998c).

REFERENCES

Albrecht, T. L., Johnson, G. M., & Walther, J. B. (1993). Understanding communication processes in focus groups. In D. L. Morgan (Ed.), *Successful focus groups: Advancing the state of the art* (pp. 51–64). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Barringer, C. E. (1992). Speaking of incest: It's not enough to say the word. *Feminism & Psychology*, 2, 183–188.

Beck, L., Trombetta, W., & Share, S. (1986).Using focus group sessions before decisions are made. *North Carolina Medical Journal, 47*, 73–74.

Belenky, M., Clinchy, B., Goldberger, N., & Tarule, J. (1986). *Women's ways of knowing: The development of self, voice and mind.* New York: Basic Books.

Bers, T. H. (1987). Exploring institutional images through focus group interviews. In R. S. Lay & J. J. Endo (Eds.), *Designing and using market research* (pp. 19–29). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Billig, M. (1992). *Talking of the royal family.* London: Routledge.

Billinghurst, B. (1996). Theorizing women's self-blame. *Feminism & Psychology, 6,* 569–573.

Bogardus, E. (1926). The group interview. *Journal of Applied Sociology, 10,* 372–382.

Bohan, J. S. (Ed.). (1992). Prologue: Re-viewing psychology, re-placing women—An end searching for a means. In J. S. Bohan (Ed.), *Seldom seen, rarely heard: Women's place in psychology* (pp. 9–53). Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Bowles, G., & Klein, R. D. (Eds.) (1983). *Theories of women's studies*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Brems, S., & Griffiths, M. (1993). Health women's way: Learning to listen. In M. Koblinsky, J. Timyan, & J. Gay (Eds.), *The health of women: A global perspective* (pp. 255–273). Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Broom, G. M., & Dozier, D. M. (1990). *Using research in public relations: Application to program management*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Brown, L. M., & Gilligan, C. (1993) Meeting at the crossroads: Women's psychology and girls' development. *Feminism & Psychology, 3,* 11–35.

Campbell, R., & Schram, P. J. (1995). Feminist research methods: A content analysis of psychology and social science textbooks. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 19,* 85–106.

Carey, M. A. (Ed.). (1995). Issues and applications of focus groups [Special issue]. *Qualitative Health Research, 5* (4).

Carey, M. A., & Smith, M. W. (1994). Capturing the group effect in focus groups: A special concern in analysis. *Qualitative Health Research, 4,* 123–127.

Chapman, T., & Johnson, A. (1995). *Growing old and needing care: A health and social care needs audit*. London: Avebury.

Chesler, P. (1972). *Women and madness*. New York: Avon.

Cooper, P., Diamond, I., & High, S. (1993). Choosing and using contraceptives: Integrating qualitative and quantitative methods in family planning. *Journal of the Market Research Society, 35,* 325–339.

Crabtree, B. F., Yanoshik, M. K., Miller, W. L., & O'Connor, P. J. (1993). Selecting individual or group interviews. In D. L. Morgan (Ed.), *Successful focus groups: Advancing the state of the art* (pp. 137–149). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Crawford, J., Kippax, S., & Waldby, C. (1994). Women's sex talk and men's sex talk: Different worlds. *Feminism & Psychology, 4,* 571–588.

Dahlgren, P. (1988). What's the meaning of this? Viewers' plural sense-making of TV news. *Media, Culture and Society, 10,* 285–301.

de Koning, K., & Martin, M. (1996). *Participatory research in health: Issues and experiences*. London: Zed Books.

Devault, M. L. (1990). Talking and listening from women's standpoint: Feminist strategies for interviewing and analysis. *Social Problems, 37,* 96–116.

DiMatteo, M. R., Kahn, K. L., & Berry, S. H. (1993). Narratives of birth and the postpartum: Analysis of the focus group responses of new mothers. *Birth, 20,* 204–211.

Erkut, S., Fields, J. P., Sing, R., & Marx, F. (1996). Diversity in girls' experiences: Feeling good about who you are. In B. J. R. Leadbetter & N. Way (Eds.), *Urban girls: Resisting stereotypes, creating identities* (pp. 53–64). New York: New York University Press.

Espin, O. M. (1995). "Race," racism and sexuality in the life narratives of immigrant women. *Feminism & Psychology, 5,* 223–238.

Farley, L. (1978). *Sexual shakedown: The sexual harassment of women on the job*. New York: Warner Books.

Fine, M. (1992). *Disruptive voices: The possibilities of feminist research*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Fine, M., & Addelston, J. (1996). Containing questions of gender and power: The discursive limits of 'sameness' and 'difference'. In S. Wilkinson (Ed.), *Feminist social psychologies: International perspectives* (pp. 66–86). Buckingham: Open University Press.

Fine, M., & Gordon, S. M. (1989). Feminist transformations of/despite psychology. In M. Crawford & M. Gentry (Eds.), *Gender and thought: Psychological perspectives* (pp. 146–174). New York: Springer-Verlag.

Flexner, W. A., McLaughlin, C. P., & Littlefield, J. E. (1977). Discovering what the consumer really wants. *Health Care Management Review, 1,* 43–49.

Fonow, M. M., & Cook, J. A. (Eds.). (1991). *Beyond methodology: Feminist scholarship as lived research*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Frazer, E. (1988). Teenage girls talking about class. *Sociology, 22,* 343–358.

Freimuth, V. S., & Greenberg, R. (1986). Pretesting television advertisements for family planning products in developing countries: A case study. *Health Education Research, 1,* 37–45.

Frey, J. H., & Fontana, A. (1993). The group interview in social research. In D. L. Morgan (Ed.), *Successful focus groups: Advancing the state of the art* (pp. 20–34). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Frith, H. (1997). *Young women refusing sex.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Department of Social Sciences, Loughborough University, England.

Geraghty, G. (1980). Social research in Asia using focus group discussions: A case study. *Media Asia, 7,* 205–211.

Gergen, K. (1987). Toward self as relationship. In K. Yardley & T. Honess (Eds.), *Self and identity: Psychosocial perspectives* (pp 52–67). Chichester: Wiley.

Goldman, A. E. (1962). The group depth interview. *Journal of Marketing, 26,* 61–68.

Goldman, A. E., & McDonald, S. S. (1987). *The group depth interview: Principles and practice.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Graham, H. (1984). Surveying through stories. In C. Bell & H. Roberts (Eds.), *Social researching, politics, problems, practice* (pp. 104–124). London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Green, G., Barbour, R. S., Bernard, M., & Kitzinger, J. (1993). "Who wears the trousers?" Sexual harassment in research settings. *Women's Studies International Forum, 16,* 627–637.

Gilligan, C. (1982). *In a different voice: Psychological theory and women's development.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Griffin, C. (1985). Qualitative methods and cultural analysis: Young women and the transition from school to un/employment. In R. Burgess (Ed.), *Field methods in the study of education.* London: Falmer Press.

Griffin, C. (1986). Qualitative methods and female experience: Young women from school to the job market. In S. Wilkinson (Ed.), *Feminist social psychology: Developing theory and practice* (pp. 173–191). Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 105–117). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Hamon, R. R., & Thiessen, J. D. (1990). *Coping with the dissolution of an adult child's marriage* (Report No. CG-023-311). Seattle, WA: National Council on Family Relations. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 330 968)

Harding, S. (1987). *Feminism and methodology.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Hare-Mustin, R. T., & Marecek, J. (Eds.). (1990). *Making a difference: Psychology and the construction of gender.* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Harrison, K., & Barlow, J. (1995). Focused group discussion: A "quality" method for health research? *Health Psychology Update, 20,* 11–13.

Henwood, K., & Pidgeon, N. (1995). Remaking the link: Qualitative research and feminist standpoint theory. *Feminism & Psychology, 5,* 7–30.

Herbert, C. M. H. (1989). *Talking of silence: The sexual harassment of schoolgirls.* London: Falmer Press.

Jarrett, R. L. (1993). Focus group interviewing with low-income minority populations: A research experience. In D. L. Morgan (Ed.), *Successful focus groups: Advancing the state of the art* (pp. 184–201). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Jayaratne, T. E., & Stewart, A. J. (1991). Quantitative and qualitative methods in the social sciences: Current feminist issues and practical strategies. In M. M. Fonow & J. A. Cook (Eds.), *Beyond methodology: Feminist scholarship as lived research* (pp. 85–106). Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Johnson, A. (1996). "It's good to talk": The focus group and the sociological imagination. *Sociological Review, 44,* 517–538.

Jordan, J. V., Kaplan, A. G., Miller, J. B., Stiver, I. P., & Surrey, J. L. (1991). *Women's growth in connection: Writings from the Stone Center.* New York: Guilford Press.

Kelly, L., Burton, S., & Regan, L. (1994). Researching women's lives or studying women's oppression? Reflections on what constitutes feminist research. In M. Maynard & J. Purvis (Eds.), *Researching women's lives from a feminist perspective* (pp. 27–48). London: Taylor & Francis.

Khan, M. E., & Manderson, L. (1992). Focus groups in tropic diseases research. *Health Policy and Planning, 7*, 56–66.

Kissling, E. A. (1996). Bleeding out loud: Communication about menstruation. *Feminism & Psychology, 6*, 481–504.

Kitzinger, C. (1992). The individuated self concept: A critical analysis of social-constructionist writing on individualism. In G. M. Breakwell (Ed.), *Social psychology of identity and the self concept* (pp. 221–250). London: Surrey University Press, in association with Academic Press.

Kitzinger, C., & Powell, D. (1995). Engendering infidelity: Essentialist and social constructionist readings of a story completion task. *Feminism & Psychology, 5*, 345–372.

Kitzinger, J. (1994a). The methodology of focus groups: The importance of interaction between research participants. *Sociology of Health and Illness, 16*, 103–121.

Kitzinger, J. (1994b). Focus groups: Method or madness? In M. Boulton (Ed.), *Challenge and innovation: Methodological advances in social research on HIV/AIDS* (pp. 159–175). London: Taylor & Francis.

Knodel, J. (1993). The design and analysis of focus group studies. In D. L. Morgan (Ed.), *Successful focus groups: Advancing the state of the art* (pp. 35–50). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Krueger, R. A. (1988). *Focus groups: A practical guide for applied research.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Kvale, S. (1996). *InterViews: An introduction to qualitative research interviewing.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Lampon, D. (1995). Lesbians and safer sex practices. *Feminism & Psychology, 5*, 170–176.

Lengua, L. J., Roosa, M. W., Schupak-Neuberg, E., Michaels, M. L., Berg, C. N., & Weschler, L. F. (1992). Using focus groups to guide the development of a parenting program for difficult-to-reach, high-risk families. *Family Relations, 41*, 163–168.

Lewin, M., & Wild, C. L. (1991). The impact of the feminist critique on tests, assessment and methodology. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 15*, 581–596.

Liebes, T. (1984). Ethnocriticism: Israelis of Moroccan ethnicity negotiate the meaning of "Dallas." *Studies in Visual Communication, 10*, 46–72.

Lott, B. (1985). The potential enrichment of social/personality psychology through feminist research and vice versa. *American Psychologist, 40*, 155–164.

Lovering, K. M. (1995). The bleeding body: Adolescents talk about menstruation. In S. Wilkinson & C. Kitzinger (Eds.), *Feminism and discourse: Psychological perspectives* (pp. 10–31). London: Sage.

Lunt, P., & Livingstone, S. (1996). Focus groups in communication and media research. *Journal of Communication, 42*, 78–87.

Lykes, M. B. (1985). Gender and individualistic versus collectivist biases for notions about the self. *Journal of Personality, 53*, 356–383.

Macpherson, P., & Fine, M. (1995). Hungry for an us: Adolescent girls and adult women negotiating territories of race, gender, class and difference. *Feminism & Psychology, 5*, 181–200.

Marecek, J. (1989). Introduction. [Special Issue on Theory and Method in Feminist Psychology.] *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 13*, 367–377.

Marshall, J. (1986). Exploring the experiences of women managers: Towards rigour in qualitative research. In S. Wilkinson (Ed.), *Feminist social psychology: Developing theory and practice* (pp. 193–209). Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

Maynard, M. (1990). Trend report: The re-shaping of sociology? Trends in the study of gender. *Sociology, 24*, 269–290.

Maynard, M., & Purvis, J. (1994). Introduction: Doing feminist research. In M. Maynard & J. Purvis (Eds.), *Researching women's lives from a feminist perspective* (pp. 1–9). London: Taylor & Francis.

Mays, V. M., Cochran, S. D., Bellinger, G., Smith, R. G., Henley, N., Daniels, M., Tibbits, T., Victorianne, G. D., Osei, O. K., & Birt, D. K. (1992). The language of black gay men's sexual behavior: Implications for AIDS risk reduction. *Journal of Sex Research, 29*, 425–434.

Mednick, M. T. (1991). Currents and futures in American feminist psychology: State of the art revisited. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 15*, 611–621.

Merton, R. K., & Kendall, P. L. (1946). The focused interview. *American Journal of Sociology, 51,* 541–557.

Merton, R. K., Fiske, M., & Kendall, P. L. (1956). *The focused interview.* New York: Free Press.

Mies, M. (1983). Towards a methodology for feminist research. In G. Bowles & R. D. Klein (Eds.), *Theories of women's studies* (pp. 117–139). London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Millward, L. J. (1995). Focus groups. In G. M. Breakwell, S. Hammond, & C. Fife-Shaw (Eds.), *Research methods in psychology* (pp. 274–291). London: Sage.

Morawski, J. G. (1994). *Practicing feminisms, reconstructing psychology.* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Morawski, J. G., & Agronick, G. (1991). A restive legacy: The history of feminist work in experimental and cognitive psychology. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 15,* 567–579.

Morgan, D. (1988). *Focus groups as qualitative research.* (Sage University Papers, Qualitative Research Methods Series, No. 16.) London: Sage.

Morgan, D. L. (Ed.). (1993). *Successful focus groups: Advancing the state of the art.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Morgan, D. L., & Krueger, R. A. (1993). When to use focus groups and why. In D. L. Morgan (Ed.), *Successful focus groups: Advancing the state of the art* (pp. 3–19). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Morgan, D. L., & Spanish, M. (1984). Focus groups: A new tool for qualitative research. *Qualitative Sociology, 7,* 253–270.

Murray, S. A., Tapson, J., Turnbull, L., McCallum, J., & Little, A. (1994). Listening to local voices: Adapting rapid appraisal to assess health and social needs in general practice. *British Medical Journal, 308,* 698–700.

Norris, J., Nurius, P. S., & Dimeff, L. A. (1996). Through her eyes: Factors affecting women's perception of and resistance to acquaintance sexual aggression threat. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 20,* 123–145.

Olesen, V. (1994). Feminisms and models of qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 158–174). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Orr, J. (1992). Working with women's health groups. In P. Abbott & R. Sapsford (Eds.), *Research into practice: A reader for nurses and the caring professions* (pp. 23–38). Buckingham: Open University Press.

Padilla, R. V. (1993). Using dialogical research methods in group interviews. In D. L. Morgan (Ed.), *Successful focus groups: Advancing the state of the art* (pp. 153–166). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Parlee, M. B. (1979). Review essay: Psychology and women. *Signs, 5,* 121–129.

Peplau, L. A., & Conrad, E. (1989). Beyond nonsexist research: The perils of feminist methods in psychology. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 13,* 379–400.

Plaut, T., Landis, S., & Trevor, J. (1993). Focus groups and community mobilization: A case study from rural North Carolina. In D. L. Morgan (Ed.), *Successful focus groups: Advancing the state of the art* (pp. 202–221). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Press, A. L. (1991). Working-class women in a middle-class world: The impact of television on modes of reasoning about abortion. *Critical Studies in Mass Communication, 8,* 421–441.

Prilleltensky, I. (1989). Psychology and the status quo. *American Psychologist, 44,* 795–802.

Raabe, B. (1993). Constructing identities: Young people's understandings of power and social relations. *Feminism & Psychology, 3,* 369–373.

Reinharz, S. (1983). Experiential analysis: A contribution to feminist research. In G. Bowles & R. D. Klein (Eds.), *Theories of women's studies* (pp. 162–191). London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Reinharz, S. (1992). *Feminist methods in social research.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Riger, S. (1992). Epistemological debates, feminist voices: Science, social values and the study of women. *American Psychologist, 47,* 730–740.

Rubin, H. J., & Rubin, I. S. (1995). *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Russo, N. F. (1995). Editorial: PWQ: A scientific voice in feminist psychology. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 19,* 1–3.

Sampson, E. E. (1988). The debate on individualism: Indigenous psychologies of the individual and their role in personal and societal functioning. *American Psychologist, 43,* 15–22.

Schlesinger, P., Dobash, R. E., Dobash, R. P., & Weaver, C. K. (1992). *Women viewing violence.* London: British Film Institute.

Seals, B. F., Sowell, R. L., Demi, A. S., Moneyham, L., Cohen, L., & Guillory, J. (1995). Falling through the cracks: Social service concerns of women infected with HIV. *Qualitative Health Research, 5,* 496–515.

Seibold, C., Richards, L., & Simon, D. (1994). Feminist method and qualitative research about midlife. *Journal of Advanced Nursing, 19,* 394–402.

Sherif, C. A. (1979/1992). Bias in psychology. Reprinted in J. S. Bohan (Ed.), *Seldom seen, rarely heard: Women's place in psychology* (pp. 107–146). Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Stanley, L., & Wise, S. (1993). *Breaking out again: Feminist ontology and epistemology.* London: Routledge.

Stewart, D. W., & Shamdasani, P. N. (1990). *Focus groups: Theory and practice.* London: Sage.

Tavris, C. (1992). *The mismeasure of woman.* New York: Simon & Schuster.

Taylor, J. M., Gilligan, C., & Sullivan, A. M. (1996). Missing voices, changing meanings: Developing a voice-centred relational method and creating an interpretive community. In S. Wilkinson (Ed.), *Feminist social psychologies: International perspectives* (pp. 233–257). Buckingham: Open University Press.

Unger, R. K. (1983). Through the looking glass: No wonderland yet! (The reciprocal relationship between methodology and models of reality.) *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 8,* 9–32.

Vaughn, S., Schumm, J. S., & Sinagub, J. (1996). *Focus group interviews in education and psychology.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Vera, E. M., Reese, L. E., Paikoff, R. L., & Jarrett, R. L. (1996). Contextual factors of sexual risk-taking in urban African American preadolescent children. In B. J. R. Leadbetter & N. Way (Eds.), *Urban girls: Resisting stereotypes, creating identities* (pp. 291–304). New York: New York University Press.

Walker, L. (1979). *The battered woman.* New York: Harper & Row.

Walkerdine, V. (1996). Working class women: Psychological and social aspects of survival. In S. Wilkinson (Ed.), *Feminist social psychologies: International perspectives* (pp. 145–162). Buckingham: Open University Press.

Watts, M., & Ebbutt, D. (1987). More than the sum of the parts: Research methods in group interviewing. *British Educational Research Journal, 13,* 25–34.

Way, N. (1995). "Can't you see the courage, the strength that I have?": Listening to urban adolescent girls speak about their relationships. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 19,* 107–128.

Weisstein, N. (1968/1993). Psychology constructs the female; or, The fantasy life of the male psychologist (with some attention to the fantasies of his friends, the male biologist and the male anthropologist). Reprinted in *Feminism & Psychology, 3,* 195–210.

Wells, W. D. (1974). Group interviewing. In R. Ferber (Ed.), *Handbook of marketing research* (pp. 2-133–2-146). New York: McGraw-Hill.

West, C., & Zimmerman, D. H. (1991). Doing gender. In J. Lorber, S. A. Farrell et al (Eds.), *The social construction of gender* (pp. 13–37). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Westkott, M. (1979). Feminist criticism of the social sciences. *Harvard Educational Review, 49,* 422–430.

Widdicombe, S. (1995). Identity, politics and talk: A case for the mundane and the everyday. In S. Wilkinson & C. Kitzinger (Eds.), *Feminism and discourse: Psychological perspectives* (pp. 106–127). London: Sage.

Wilkinson, S. (1986). Sighting possibilities: Diversity and commonality in feminist research. In S. Wilkinson (Ed.), *Feminist social psychology: Developing theory and practice* (pp. 7–24). Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

Wilkinson, S. (1998a). Focus groups in feminist research: Power, interaction and the co-construction of meaning. *Women's Studies International Forum, 21,* 111–125.

Wilkinson, S. (1998b) Focus groups in health research: Exploring the meanings of health and illness. *Journal of Health Psychology, 3,* 329–348.

Wilkinson, S. (1998c). Focus group methodology: A review. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology, 1,* 181–203.

Wilkinson, S., & Kitzinger, C. (Eds.). (1995). *Feminism and discourse: Psychological perspectives.* London: Sage.

Wilkinson, S., & Kitzinger, C. (Eds.). (1996). *Representing the other: A "Feminism & Psychology" reader.* London: Sage.

Willott, S., & Griffin, C. (1997) Wham bam, am I a man? Unemployed men talk about masculinities. *Feminism & Psychology, 7,* 107–128.

Wong, G. C., Li, V. C., Burris, M. A., & Xiang, Y. (1995). Seeking women's voices: Setting the context for women's health interventions in two rural counties in Yunnan, China. *Social Science and Medicine, 41,* 1147–1157.

Worell, J., & Etaugh, C. (1994). Transforming theory and research with women: Themes and variations. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 18,* 433–450

Zeller, R. A. (1993). Focus group research on sensitive topics: Setting the agenda without setting the agenda. In D. L. Morgan (Ed.), *Successful focus groups: Advancing the state of the art* (pp. 167–183). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.