



Research Workshop Series

Session 2: Surveys and Focus Groups

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Workshop Series

2018

October 2 Data, Research, and Evidence Overview

November 28 Surveys and Focus Groups

2019

**January 29 Interviews, Observations, and Rubric
Development**

**March 4 Understanding and Interpreting Qualitative
and Quantitative Evidence**

**April 1 Research Resources and Data
Visualization**



Today's Goals

1. Discuss **appropriate uses of surveys and focus groups** to collect data.
2. Overview **design framework** best practices for planning surveys and focus groups.
3. Create **initial plans for survey or focus group data collection** in Illinois State Board of Education research projects.

Agenda

1. Surveys and Focus Groups
2. Constructs, Measures and Survey Items
3. Writing or Selecting Survey Items
4. Survey Sampling Design
5. Focus Groups: Planning and Protocol Design
6. Closing

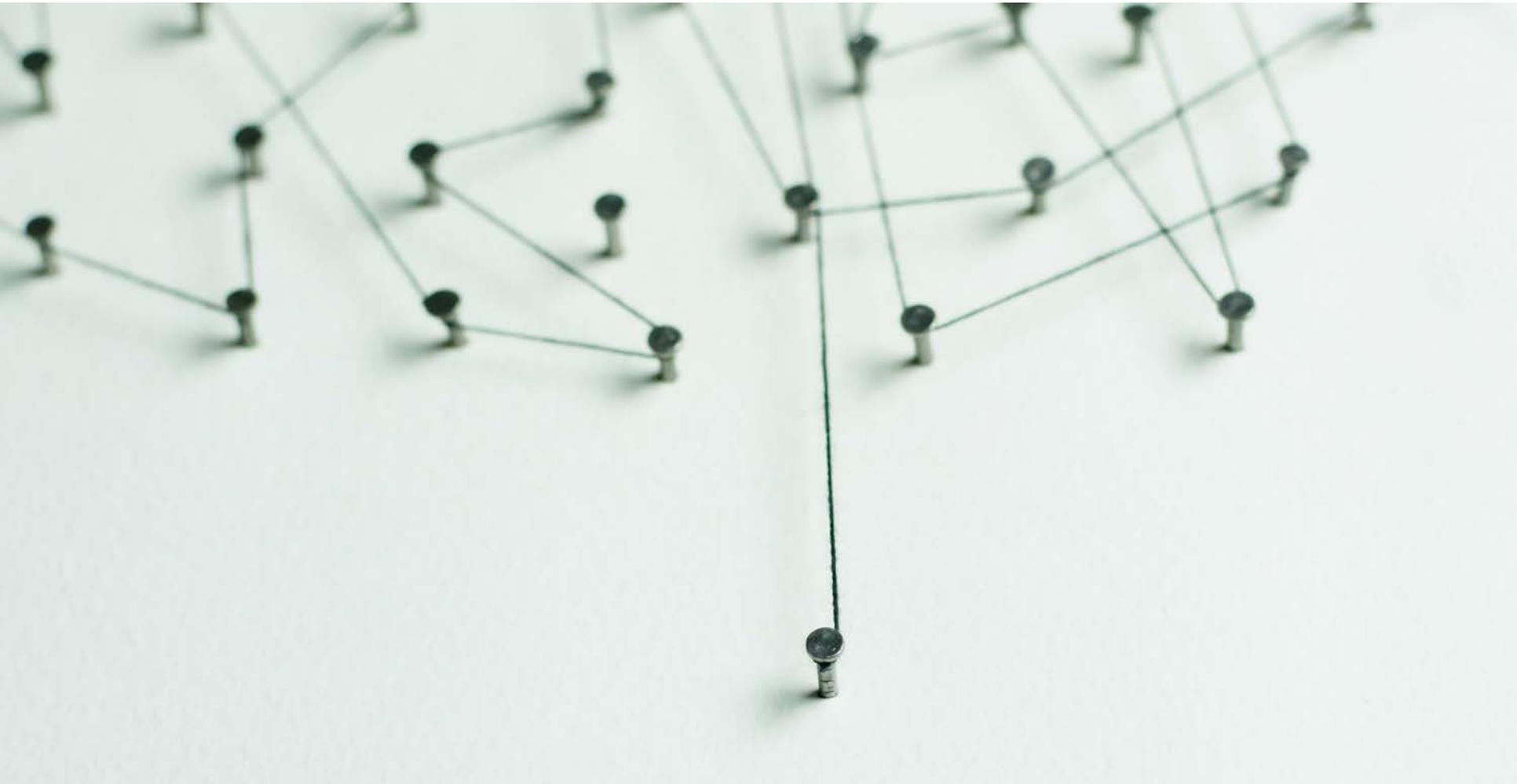
Surveys and Focus Groups



Surveys gather data **on perceptions** or **reported behaviors** of respondents.



Focus groups use **probative questioning** and **participant interaction** to obtain data on various perspectives and experiences.



Considerations for Surveys and Focus Groups

Surveys

- Perceptions / opinions
- Reported behaviors
- Self-reported measures
- Representative

Focus Groups

- “Thick description” of lived experience
- Participant interaction
- Nonrepresentative

Handout 1.

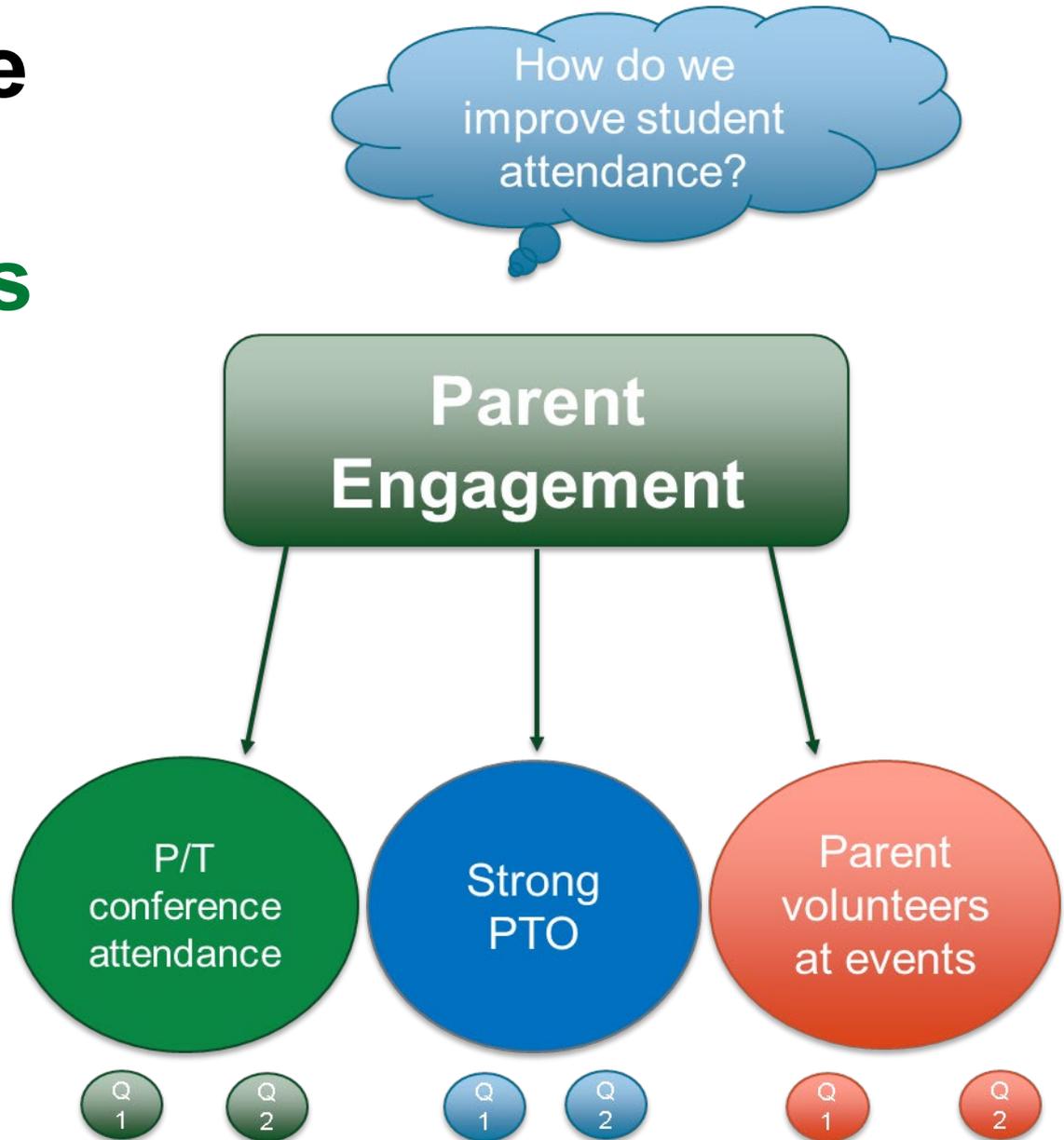
Project Updates and

Today's Focus

Constructs, Measures and Survey Items

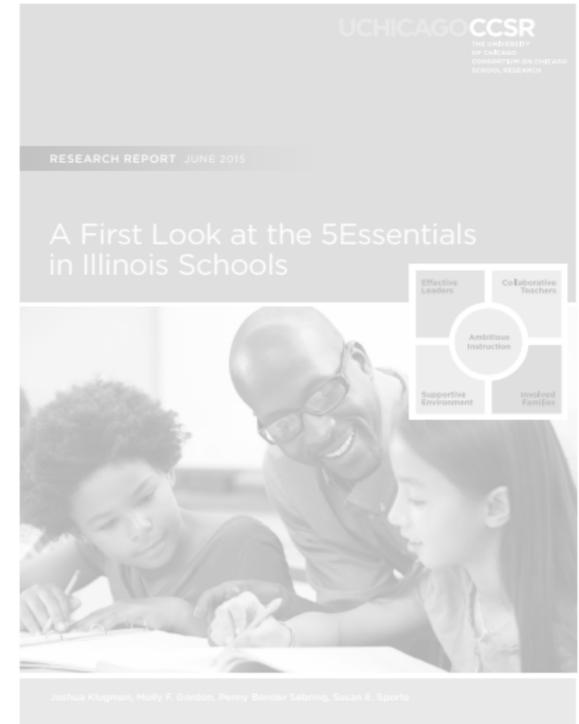


Constructs are agreed-upon topics or areas of interest, driven by the research question, which cannot be directly measured.



Constructs Underlying the Illinois 5Essentials Survey

- Effective Leadership
- Collaborative Teaching
- Family Involvement
- Supportive Environments
- Ambitious Instruction



Klugman, J., Gordon, M. F., Sebring, P. B., & Sparto, S. E. (2015). *A first look at the 5Essentials in Illinois Schools*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Consortium on School Research.

Construct Measures

Constructs Underlying the Illinois 5Essentials Survey

- Effective Leadership
- Collaborative Teaching
- Family Involvement
- Supportive Environments
- Ambitious Instruction

Supportive Environments

- My teachers always keep their promises.
- I feel safe and comfortable with my teachers at this school.
- My teachers always listen to students' ideas.
- When my teachers tell me not to do something, I know they have a good reason.
- My teachers treat me with respect.

Research teams select available and appropriate measures for each construct.

Surveys/focus groups can gather data on participant:

- Perceptions / Opinions
- Reported Behaviors

Selecting or Writing Survey Items



Considerations for Developing Surveys

- When surveying people's opinions or experiences, it is preferable to use previously validated items.
- Examine literature and existing surveys for validated scales related to your constructs of interest.
- Pretest new surveys and survey items with cognitive interviews, pilot tests, or focus groups.



When using **prevalidated** scales...

- Keep in mind the original context of survey items (e.g., implementation date, population demographics, sampling design).
- Pretest to minimize context-specific errors.
- Reference previous studies to ensure that the scales measure what you are intending.

When building your own **survey**...

- Pretest to ensure that questions are received as intended by participants.
 - Pilot the survey with a small group of people from the population of interest.
 - Conduct one-on-one cognitive interviews or focus groups.
- If at all possible, ensure validity by conducting a factor analysis.

Always consider a population's **context** when developing your survey items.



Best Practices in Designing Survey Items (Questions)

Be specific.

Do you work full time?

This is more specific.

Currently, about how many total hours per week do you typically work for pay, counting all jobs?

Use clear directions where necessary—for example:

Survey Item Design Best Practices

- Select all that apply.
- Select only one response.
- Round to the nearest whole number.
- Do not include long-term substitute teachers in your total count.

Avoid double-barreled items.

Survey Item Design Best Practices

To what extent are your measures of progress quantitative and objective?

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graph TD; A["To what extent are your measures of progress quantitative and objective?"] --> B["To what extent are your measures of progress quantitative?"]; A --> C["To what extent are your measures of progress objective?"];
```

To what extent are your measures of progress quantitative?

To what extent are your measures of progress objective?

Each item should represent a unidimensional concept.

Avoid items pertaining to long stretches of time.

How many times in the last year did you use public transit instead of driving to work?

Avoid hypotheticals.

If it lowered the amount of money you spent on travel but was less convenient, would you use public transit?

Make responses mutually exclusive.

What is wrong with these items?

How many years have you been teaching?

- **0–5 years**
- **5–10 years**
- **10+ years**

Which best describes the size of your family?

- **2–3 people**
- **4–6 people**
- **6 or more**

**Make responses
collectively
exhaustive.**

**What is wrong with
this item?**

**How often do you
assign homework?**

- **Monthly**
- **Weekly**
- **Daily**

Make responses anchored by objective markers.

What is wrong with these items?

How often do students in your class use a computer to write?

- **Never**
- **Sometimes**
- **Often**
- **Frequently**

How would you rate the difficulty of your course?

- **Little to no difficulty**
- **Fairly difficult**
- **Very difficult**

Activity: Handout 2. From Construct to Measure Group Planning

Survey Sampling Design



Consider who will provide the most accurate data and **define** a target population.



When creating a sampling procedure, remember...

- It is not necessary to survey every member of the target population.**
- Take care in deciding to conduct a random sample or representative sample.**
- If oversampling subgroups, take the appropriate steps in analysis.**

**Be wary of
convenience
samples.**



Things to keep in mind...

Always take time to **consider** the relationship between the survey sender and the participant.



Strategies to Increase Response Rates and Data Quality

Incentives to complete:

- Monetary incentives
- Framing the survey “ask” in a way that connects to the respondent
- Providing the respondent with information on how results are used
- Giving a timeframe for completing the survey (e.g., 10 minutes)

Incentives to answer honestly:

- Assuring confidentiality
- Nonevaluative language
- Avoid acronyms
- Language that is familiar to the survey taker



Break

Focus Groups: Planning and Protocol Design

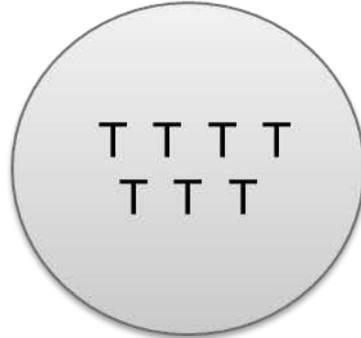


Determine the number of participants and groupings.

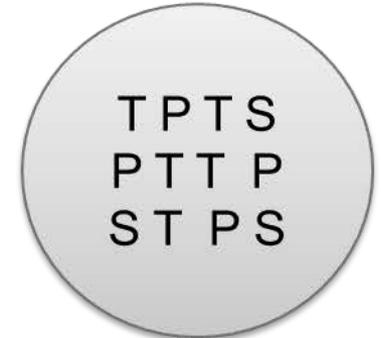
Homogenous

Heterogeneous

Teachers



All Personnel



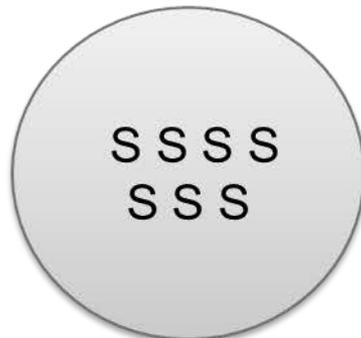
Principals



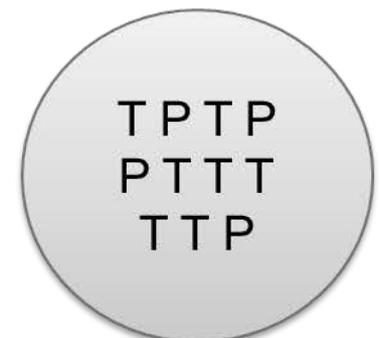
Administrative
Personnel



Superintendents



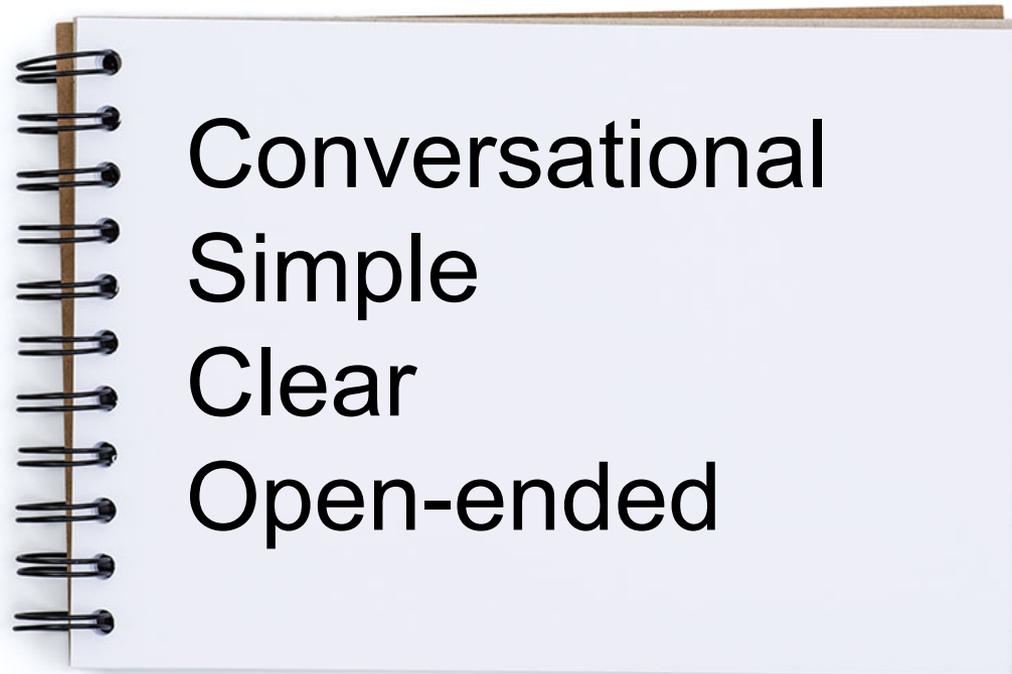
School-Based
Personnel



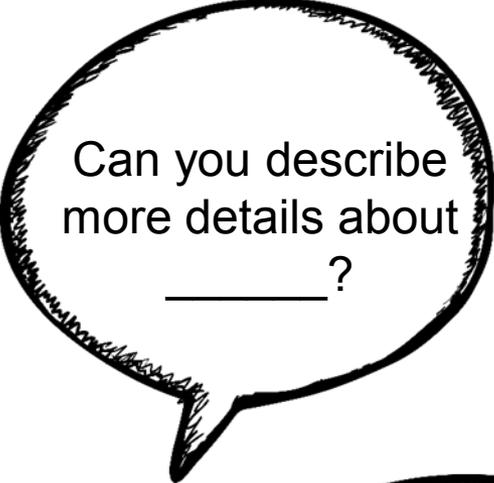
Components of Good Focus Group Scripts

Component	Purpose
Introduction	Lays out expectations for the session, including confidentiality.
Opening Questions	Broad questions that help participants get acquainted and feel connected.
Content Questions	Obtain insight into areas of central concern to the study.
Probing Questions	Use participants' prior answers to get deeper insights into the research questions.
Conclusion	Helps researchers determine where to place emphasis and brings closure to the discussion.

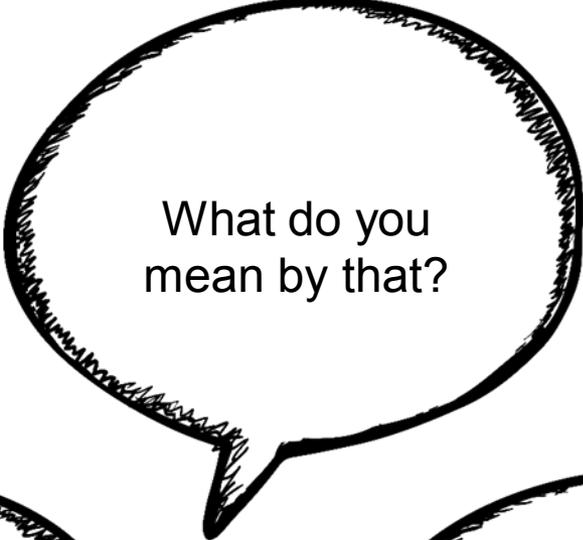
Scripted questions should be:



Don't ask "why" questions. Instead, ask for more information.



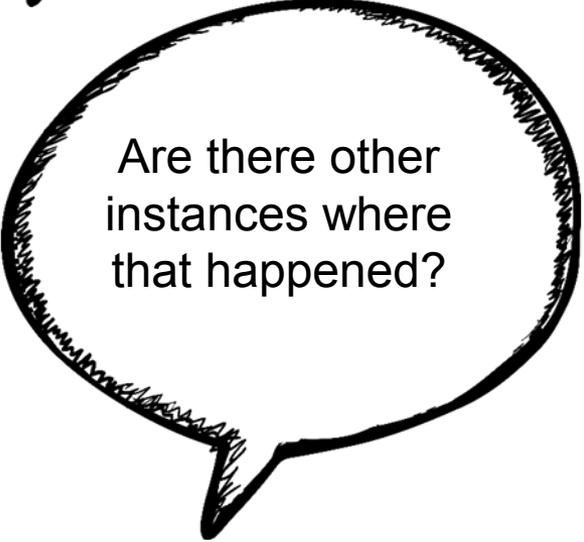
Can you describe more details about _____?



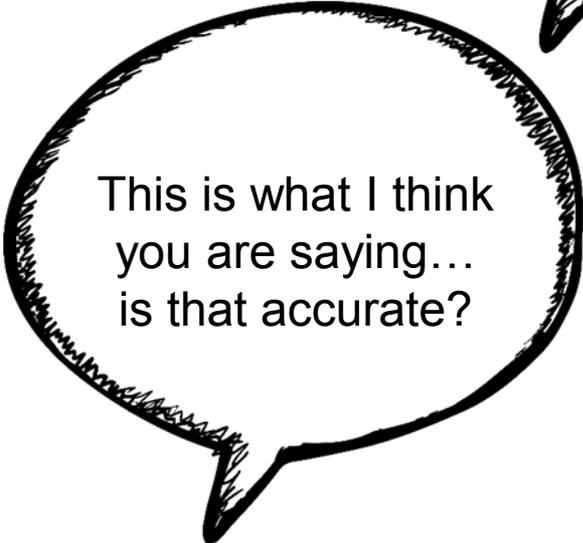
What do you mean by that?



And how did that make you feel?



Are there other instances where that happened?



This is what I think you are saying... is that accurate?

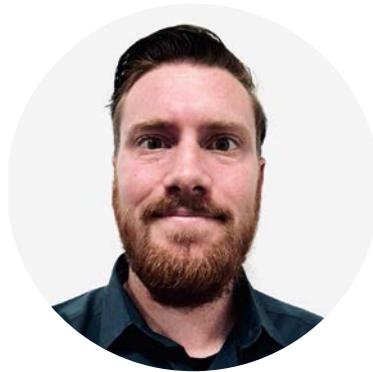
There is no need to conduct exhaustive numbers of focus groups. Eventually, you will hit a point of **diminishing returns...**

Work Session: Group Planning for Surveys and Focus Groups

- Handout 3. Survey Sampling Planning Tool
- Handout 4. Focus Group Planning Tool
- Handout 5. Annotated Semistructured Focus Group Script

**Revisiting today's work,
what were you able to
accomplish?**





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Additional Resources

Resources

- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (5th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Dillman, D. A., Smyth, J. D., & Christian L. M. (2009). *Internet, mail, and mixed-mode surveys: The tailored design method* (3rd ed.). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.
- Klugman, J., Gordon, M. F., Sebring, P. B., & Spote, S. E. (2015). *A first look at the 5Essentials in Illinois schools*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Consortium on School Research.
- Morgan, D. L. (1997). *Focus groups as qualitative research* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Morgan D. L., & Krueger, R. A. (1998). *The focus group kit*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.