



# Literature Reviews | Focus Groups

**Doing Political Research, Week 4**



# Essay: Questions to Ask

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- Process
  - Philosophy: What ontology and epistemology underpinned the research? Was the research question and method consistent with the underlying philosophy?
  - Question: How clear was the research question? Did the author(s) answer the question? Was it a 'good' question?
  - Literature review: How effectively was existing literature critically analysed and evaluated? Was it clear how the research would contribute to or challenge previous research?
  - Theory: What were the theoretical assumptions? Were these assumptions sound? Were the concepts used in the theory clearly defined?
- Method:
  - What method was used? How effective was the method for tackling the topic? How well was the method implemented?
  - What limitations were there to the method? What other methods could have been used?
  - What would you have done differently? What additional research could be conducted?



# Literature Reviews

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- What are the main things to look out for when reviewing the academic literature on a topic?
- What makes for a good literature review?
- Consider a research topic you are interested in. What don't we know about it? What has previous research missed?

# Davenport

- What controversies are there in the literature on racial fluidity?
- What unanswered questions are there on this topic?
- Did Davenport do a good job of reviewing the literature?

## The Fluidity of Racial Classifications

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### Keywords

race, ethnicity, identity, political behavior, United States, Latin America

### Abstract

In this article, I review the social science literature on racial fluidity, the idea that race is flexible and impermanent. I trace the ongoing evolution of racial classifications and boundaries in the United States and Latin America, two regions that share a history of European colonization, slavery, and high levels of race mixing but that have espoused very different racial ideologies. Traditionally, for many groups in the United States, race was seen as unchangeable and determined by ancestry; in contrast, parts of Latin America have lacked strict classification rules and embraced race mixing. However, recent research has shown that race in the United States can change across time and context, particularly for populations socially defined as more ambiguous, while some Latin American racial boundaries are becoming more stringent. I argue that the fluidity of race has redefined our understanding of racial identities, and propose several directions for future political science scholarship that bridges disciplines and methodological approaches.

# Designing a Focus Group Study

- Choose a research question to investigate a political process or phenomenon and design a focus-group-based study to answer it.
- Who will you include in your focus groups? Will you vary the composition of participants in any way?
- How will you conduct the focus groups? What questions will you ask? Will you use any prompts?
- What level(s) of analysis are you interested in: individual, group or interactive?
- How will you analyse the data?



# Jarvis et al

- Who was/wasn't included in the focus groups? How might this have affected the results?
- What level of analysis did they focus on: individual, group or interactive? Could they have examined other levels of analysis?
- How reliable are the results? How would you improve the study? What other methods could have been used?

## Public conceptions and constructions of 'British values': A qualitative analysis

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and Eylem Atakav

### Abstract

This article draws on original focus group research to explore constructions of 'British values', in 'everyday' discourse. Two prominent, yet competing conceptions of this term are identified: political/institutional and social/cultural. Although each of these conceptions risks essentialising 'British values', this risk is mitigated by publics in at least three ways: (1) explicit recognition of the term's ambiguities; (2) discussion of its political motivations and exclusionary outcomes; and, (3) identification of qualitative change in the meaning of 'British values' over time. As the first exploration of public understandings of this term, their differences, and these complications, the paper offers three contributions: (1) adding breadth to existing studies of everyday nationalism through focus on 'British values' specifically; (2) shedding light on this trope's work in broader conversations around social and political life in the United Kingdom; and (3) facilitating reflection on the reception of, resistance to, and re-making of elite political discourse.

### Keywords

British values, discourse, everyday, focus groups, nationalism, national identity

### Introduction

... it's interesting that we tend not to give Britishness a second thought, because we just make the assumptions that that's how things are. But coming here, it made me stop and think and consider what it means to me, and what, what is the essence of Britishness, do we have any unique characteristics, or, if so what are they?<sup>1</sup>

'British values', argued Prime Minister David Cameron (2014) in a *Mail on Sunday* article of 14 June 2014, include 'a belief in freedom, tolerance of others, accepting personal and social responsibility, [and] respecting and upholding the rule of law'. Values such as these, he continued, are rooted in national historical struggles, maintained by contemporary institutions from newspapers to the Houses of Parliament, and so important – so

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