

# EABSS Workshop 2023

## Co-Creation of Agent-Based Social Simulation Models

**Running Focus Groups**

# Definition of a Focus Group

- What?
  - A carefully planned discussion
  - To obtain perceptions of a defined interest area
- Where?
  - In a permissive, non-threatening environment
- How?
  - Conducted by a trained interviewer (moderator, facilitator)



# Definition of a Focus Group

- Do not confuse with
  - A debate
  - Group therapy
  - A conflict resolution session
  - A problem solving session
  - An opportunity to collaborate
  - A promotional opportunity
  - An educational session



# Focus Group Members

- Who?
  - Small group with common characteristics relating to discussion topic
    - Usually 7-10 participants
  - Who are the relevant stakeholders?
    - Should they be organised in separate groups (by stakeholder type)?

# Purpose of a Focus Group

- Why?
  - To collect qualitative data
  - To determine feelings, perceptions and manner of thinking of participants regarding products, services, programs or opportunities
    - Attitudes and perceptions are developed in part by interaction with other people
  - To promote self-disclosure (the process of passing on information about yourself to someone else) among participants
  - It's dangerous to take "people" for granted
    - There is a need to better understand their motivations and behaviour

# Limitations

- What are the risks and limitations?
  - Risk of biases introduced by the moderator(s)
  - Domineering and/or passive participants
  - Usually does not provide depth of information compared to other methods, such as key informant interviews



# Moderator's Role

- The moderator ...
  - Stays relaxed and sets tone
  - Introduces and guides the discussion
  - Actively and carefully listens
  
- Does NOT participate, or share views, or engage in the discussion
- Does NOT editorialise comments
  
- Promotes everyone's participation
- Is non-judgmental and respectful



# Types of Questions

- Engagement questions
  - Introduce participants to and make them comfortable with the topic of discussion
- Exploration questions
  - Get to the meat of the discussion
- Exit question
  - Check to see if anything was missed in the discussion



# Example: Dental Flossing Focus Group

- Engagement questions
  - What is your favourite toothpaste?
  - What do you notice when you look at other people's teeth?
- Exploration questions
  - Who in particular has influenced your dental habits?
  - What are the pros and cons of flossing your teeth?
  - When you floss, how do follow through? When you don't, why not?
  - How do you feel when told about possible damage caused by not flossing?
  - How do you feel about yourself when flossing regularly? When you don't?



# Example: Dental Flossing Focus Group

- Exit question
  - Is there anything else you would like to say about why you do or do regular basis?



# How To Proceed?

- Check out further information on focus groups



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Auf9pkuCc8k>

Any Questions?

