Divining Desire: Focus Groups and the Culture of Consultation, 9781682191071, OR Books, 2018, Liza Featherstone, 254 pages, 2018

"The focus group has been a staple of the American consumer and political landscape for well more than a half-century, yet few know its history, ubiquity, and limitations. Liza Featherstone has filled in the knowledge gap with this brilliantly conceived and elegantly written book. Divining Desire is essential for anyone trying to understand how business and political elites connect with their desired audience—or fail to." — Stephen Duncombe, Professor of Media and Culture, New York University and author of Dream: Reimagining Radical Politics in an Age of Fantasy. "Fake input came long before fake news, and fake input is just as dangerous. Read Divining Desire by Liza Featherstone with a free trial. Read unlimited* books and audiobooks on the web, iPad, iPhone and Android. The focus group, over the course of the last century, became an increasingly vital part of the way companies and politicians sold their products and policies with few areas of life, from salad dressing to health care legislation to our favorite TV shows, left untouched by moderators questioning controlled groups about what they liked and didn't. Divining Desire is the first-ever popular survey of this topic. In a lively, sweeping survey, Liza Featherstone traces the surprising roots of the focus group in early-twentieth century European socialism, its subsequent use by the "Mad Men" method as the doomed launch of the Ford Edsel with its vagina shaped radiator grille, and the even more ill-fated attempt to introduce a new flavor of Coca Cola (which prompted street protests from devotees of the old formula). As elites have become Liza Featherstone's new book Divining Desire: Focus Groups and the Culture of Consultation takes a critical look at the history and methodology of focus groups and their place in political and cultural life. In this interview with Kate Wagner, Featherstone explains how, whether in politics or in advertising, listening and empowering are two different things.