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# The group interview in social research

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## Abstract

The group interview has been overlooked by social researchers in general and by ethnographic investigators in particular. Their preference has been for the individual interview. Group interviews can be formal with a specific, structured purpose such as a marketing focus group, or, it can be informal taking place in a field setting where a researcher stimulates a group discussion with a topical question. The data generated can be instrumental and factual, or, it can be subjective and qualitative. Researchers can use group interviews as a more efficient use of resources and as a means of adding valuable insight to the interpretation of a social or behavioral event. On the cautionary side, lessons from group dynamics tell us that the characteristics of the group (e.g. size) and background of members (e.g. leadership style) can impact the interaction and response patterns within the group. Still, the group interview has great potential for social research.



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