

Chapter 5

Group Discussions as a Methodology in Multicultural Settings

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ABSTRACT

The chapter highlights the relevance of qualitative methods, especially group discussions, in social research within multicultural contexts. It emphasizes selecting participants reflecting the study's cultural diversity and thorough preparation, including choosing a competent moderator and an accessible, inclusive venue. Steps for conducting these discussions are described, from creating the script to interpreting the discourse. During analysis, the focus is on understanding varied perspectives and intercultural interaction subtleties, recommending a systematic approach to ensure reliability and validity through careful data selection and category coding. Originating in the 1930s, group discussions have expanded beyond market research, distinguished by their flexibility and exploratory focus. Key phases include design, operation, data analysis, and reporting, with guidelines for participant selection and project preparation. The chapter concludes by highlighting the importance of these discussions in exploring perceptions and attitudes in multicultural settings.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter argues the relevance of qualitative methods, which employ natural language, to quickly access the life world of individuals. It focuses on the value of *Group Discussions* as a key qualitative tool, especially in social research involving multicultural settings. The chapter starts by highlighting the need to carefully select participants who reflect the cultural diversity of the study context. It also under-

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scores the importance of thorough preparation, including choosing a capable moderator and addressing logistical details like selecting and inclusive an accessible meeting place.

Moving onto implementation phase, the chapter outlines the essential steps for successfully conducting *Group Discussions*. It covers everything from creating the discussion script to interpreting the discourse. During the analysis phase, the chapter emphasizes understanding the varied perspectives within the group and the nuances of intercultural interaction. It underlines the need for a systematic a verifiable approach to ensure the reliability and validity of the findings, which involves cautious data selection, information segmentation and coding of relevant categories to identify emerging themes.

Furthermore, the chapter stresses the importance of clearly communicating research findings through well-structured reports. By following these details practices, researchers can deepen the understanding and gain valuable insights in multicultural research environments. This comprehensive framework supply scientists to effectively design, conduct and analyse *Group Discussions*, thereby contributing significant knowledge to the field of social research in diverse cultural contexts.

HISTORY OF GROUP DISCUSSIONS

In the late 1930s, social scientists began exploring the relevance of non-directive individual interviews as a refined source of information, aiming to address the limitations of traditional interview methods (Ortega, 2005). This shift was driven by the recognition that traditional individual interviews, employing predetermined questionnaires with closed-ended response choices, often restricted respondents' answers and risked introducing inadvertent interviewer bias or omission. Non-directive procedures emerged as a promising alternative, starting from minimal initial assumptions and placing considerable emphasis on connecting with the interviewee's reality (Krueger, 1991).

Concurrently, psychologists and social scientists in this era found particular appeal in the non-directive approach (Krueger, 1991). Key procedures that would later become common practice in *Group Discussions* were introduced in the seminal work “*The Focused Interview*” (1956) by Robert K. Merton, Marjorie Fiske, and Patricia L. Kendall. By the late 1930s, *Group Discussions* were predominantly employed in market research settings, proving valuable for understanding consumer behavior and preferences (Krueger, 1991).

Over time, their utility expanded beyond advertising, gaining popularity among researchers in diverse fields such as social sciences, evaluation, planning, and education (Ortega, 2005). Currently, *Group Discussions* are acknowledged as pivotal instruments for gaining insights into perceptions, emotions, and attitudes within multicultural settings. They play a significant role in educational, medical, and social intervention initiatives, where accountability and impact assessment hold paramount importance (Krueger, 1991).

DEFINITION OF GROUP DISCUSSIONS

To begin, let us clarify Focus Groups, *Group Discussions*, and Group Interviews. Broadly, Focus Groups are more common in English-speaking contexts, while *Group Discussions* are often used in Spanish-speaking countries. These methodologies diverge in terms of in their degree of structure and focus. *Group Discussions* are flexible and exhibit exploratory characteristics, observing and understand-

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