Overview of Types of Group Interviews

Work in Progress --- M. Hageboeck, 3/38/06

Type of Group Interview	Purpose of the Interview	Size of Group *(on average)*	Composition of Group	Nature of the Interview Process
Small to Medium Size Group Interviews				
Topical/Oral History Group Interview	Reconstruct an historical record, e.g., what things were like at an earlier time (before the project started); what has changed over time; key events during the time period being examined; recall of evidence about cause and effect relationships	Three to seven	Individuals who are expected to be knowledgeable concerning the facts (and sequences of events) about a specific situation and change in that situation over time.	Interviewers use a structured or semi-structured interview guide. Questions are asked in turn. Rotate/ Randomize which participant answers first. All participants are given an opportunity to contribute to every answer. Listening to other group members is intended to spark recall. Interviewer intervenes to the extent needed to bring out specific facts and elements of a sequence.
Delphi Group Interview	Identify priorities among an existing set of ideas/options (e.g., which activities to fund) Delphi Group techniques can be used to ascertain	Ranging from five to fifteen. A Delphi Group is assembled as a virtual group rather than in a specific	Subject experts or stakeholders whose roles in a process make it important for them to understand how others stakeholders view ideas/options. One early use of this technique was for	Facilitated process for building a consensus around a set of ideas or options. Facilitation normally begins with a list. Sufficient information must be provided on each item to ensure that all Delphi Group members fully understand each item on which they will be asked to express a view. A voting process is used to identify items that members of the group consider to be important. The process may or may not include a information from Delphi Group members about why

Type of Group Interview	Purpose of the Interview	Size of Group *(on average)*	Composition of Group	Nature of the Interview Process
	where differences in views exist among experts or stakeholders or they can be deliberately used to foster a consensus. Some commentators believe that Delphi techniques, by their nature, foster consensus whether that was the intention or not.	location, i.e., communicati on is between the facilitator and each member of the Delhi Group. Delphi Group members may or may not know each other.	forecasting or predictions, i.e., seeking a consensus about what would happen (often in a scientific arena) from a group of experts.	they considered certain items more important than others. Ranking or voting on items is communicated to the facilitator on paper. The facilitator aggregates the responses and provides the results to all Delphi Group members. Information how specific group members voted or the specific source of more detailed comments about why particular items were selected is not shared. Two rounds of rankings are normally used. Information about how others voted in a prior round may affect rankings/voting in the next round.
Nominal Group Interview	Generate new ideas/options (e.g., about what to do next) and rank group priorities with respect to those ideas/options. Nominal groups are considered useful for identifying the "best" ideas or options from a set of possibilities.	Six to twelve	Individuals are selected whose ideas and judgments are valued. Participants in a nominal group interview may or may not be selected because of their role in implementing ideas that emerge from the process. In some instances the participants will be technical experts who have no role beyond offering ideas or options. In other cases participants will be community members who	A combination of methods is normal in a Nominal Group interview process. Generally, facilitator/interviewers starts with a topic or question, which is usually quite narrowly defined. Responses, often in the form of ideas, are elicited from each member of the group, ususally through a paper and pencil exercise. Once individuals have provided their ideas independently, the facilitator/interviewer leads a discussion of each idea or suggestion making sure that all ideas and options are fully understood by everyone in the group. Voting on the top or best suggestions follows the discussion and results in a ranking of what participants view as the best or top priority ideas or options to pursue.

Type of Group Interview	Purpose of the Interview	Size of Group *(on average)*	Composition of Group	Nature of the Interview Process
			will be involved in implementing what the nominal group determines are its best options.	
Focus Group Interview	Elicit reactions to a message, product, or idea/ option and through probing questions understand the reasons for the reactions that are observed/reported	Seven to ten in location selected by the facilitator. Telephone focus groups (conference calls) and on line focus groups (bulletin boards) are variations of this technique.	Individuals selected for a focus group are often selected according to criteria that ensures that they are homogeneous in ways that are expected to affect their reactions to the message/product/topic the focus group will explore. Some focus groups selected participants on the basis of demographics, i.e., middle class mothers of small children. Others select participants based on a shared experience, e.g., cancer survivors. When a focus groups are conducted out to test a message or product a single focus group is not usually considered adequate. The norm in this case is three groups of roughly the same size selected using exactly	Semi-structured, facilitated discussion among members of the group. The facilitators role is a complex one. It involves introducing a stimulus (message, product, topic) to the group and eliciting their reactions. A show of hands is sometimes used to make sure that everyone's reactions are clear, but the counts among such small numbers of people are not usually taken to be significant in and of themselves. The facilitator guides the group from their reactions to a discussion of the reasons why people reacted the way they did. Discussions among focus group members are encouraged. Group interactions are what are recorded in a focus group interview more so than responses of group members to the facilitator. Because of the complexity of these interactions, focus group interviews are more likely to be recorded for post-group analysis than are many other kinds of group interviews.

Type of Group Interview	Purpose of the Interview	Size of Group *(on average)*	Composition of Group	Nature of the Interview Process
			the same criteria. The results of three focus groups are then "averaged" to the extent that the qualitative nature of the focus group data allows, i.e., a focus group report will highlight strong patterns for reactions and the most frequently cited reasons that explain group member response to a message/product/topic.	
Cultural/ Ethnographic Group Interview	Understand group values and priorities and learn how things work (e.g., how decisions are made) in a defined group or in the culture represented by members of the group	Often a function of the type of group. May range of very small groups, e.g., 2-3 to larger groups of 10-20 that will provide information from which what is typical in a group can be discerned.	Participants are selected from the group or from which information is needed. In some instances, interviews could be conducted with a number of families from a community, one family at a time. A somewhat larger group might be used to carryout an interview that focuses on the culture of an organization or processes that characterize a community Rooted in anthropology,	Cultural/ethnographic interviews are usually carried out in the location in which the group is normally found, (e.g., village, office, medical center). Interviews use open-ended questions in combination with follow-up questions that seek additional detail or help to categorize/structure open ended responses. An interviewer indicates a topic about which he hopes to learn from the group about how the group views, values or operates in regard to the topic. An open ended question that requires a descriptive response is normally asked first (e.g., how are important decisions typically made in this community?) Probing is often in the form of naieve questions that indicate that the interviewer does not fully understand something and would benefit from examples or further explanation. Follow-up questions from an interviewer are often used to clarify categories and other structural concepts used

Type of Group Interview	Purpose of the Interview	Size of Group *(on average)*	Composition of Group	Nature of the Interview Process
			cultural or ethnographic group interviews are now used for a much wider range of purposes (e.g., determine how decisions about vehicle purchases are made in various ethnic subpopulations or how employees in a given company use their computers to facilitate their work).	by the respondents (e.g., decisions about family disputes versus decisions about the allocation of community resources).
Combination Group Interview/ Survey Meeting	Gather individual response data in conjunction with (a) imparting information to small groups using a discussion format or (b) probing the basis for responses after obtaining information from individuals through a written or oral survey.			