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FEMINIST RESEARCH

# Focus groups in feminist research: Power, interaction, and the co-construction of meaning

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### Abstract

Despite a theoretical emphasis on understanding the person-in-context, individualistic research methods have dominated feminist psychology, and feminist research more generally. I suggest the need for more socially situated methods, and argue that group interviews, or focus groups, are of particular value in conducting, and developing, feminist research. The historical development of focus groups is briefly outlined and examples provided of their use in contemporary feminist research projects. I demonstrate that the particular benefits of focus groups include: addressing feminist ethical concerns about power and the imposition of meaning; generating high quality, interactive data; and offering the possibility of theoretical advances regarding the co-construction of meaning between people. The potential for future development of focus

group theory and methodology in feminist research is argued, and illustrated, in particular, with reference to the dynamic negotiation of meaning in specific social contexts.



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