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Qualitative Research: Introduction, Sampling and Approaches
Part II

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Sampling in Qualitative Research

- You do not have to interview everyone (in a community, hospital, neighborhood) to get a “good” sample
- The specific set of people to be researched, interviewed etc.
- How do I choose?
  - What is my research objective?
  - Of what kind of people is my subset comprised?—does my sample adequately reflect the diversity and variation of my population
  - Saturation: am I still get new information and results?

Purposeful sampling starts with a specific group in order to get an in-depth understanding.

Extreme or Deviant Case

- Unusual cases related to your research, the outliers
  - Notable successes or failures; top of the class/bottom of the class
  - Information on something unique
  - i.e. (studying battered women and you find women that have killed their abusers)

Convenience Sampling

- “Because they are there”: people closely surrounding you
- Weakest rationale and low credibility
  - Highly biased: think the sample represents the whole
- Cheap, fast, easy
- Information poor
- i.e.: When you ask your neighbors or co-workers to fill out the questionnaire

Snowball Sampling

- Start with a few respondents and then ask them who else might have _____ or know about ____?
  - Football players, gardeners, mental health problems
  - Find a few diabetic patients and then ask them who else they know that has diabetes

Theoretical Sampling

- Usually used in grounded theory approach
- The process of data collection for generating theory whereby the analyst jointly collects, codes, and analyzes his data and decides what data to collect next and where to find them, in order to develop the theory as it emerges" (Glaser and Strauss, 1967)
- Examines and expounds on theoretical constructs

Intensity Sampling

- Not as exceptional as extreme/deviant
- Still the outliers
- Information-rich cases
- Usually researcher has previous knowledge of variations so that he/she knows what is intense vs extreme
- i.e.: studying Postpartum Blues; what is blues vs. depression vs. psychosis

Maximum Variation Sampling

- Picking a wide range, very diverse group
- Looking for patterns and themes among a varied group
- Document shared dimensions **and** unique variations
- “if you deliberately try to interview a very different selection of people their aggregate answers can be close the whole population’s”

Homogenous Sampling

- Similar groups of people with similar backgrounds
- Reduced variation
- Simple analysis
- Used often in focus groups

- If you are studying parenting program participation, the whole group might be single dads…

Typical Case Sampling

- Shows what is typical-excludes deviant or intense cases
- Helps to give an overview to people with no background
- Helpful for very large or complex projects
- Shows critical issues that should be addressed based on who you sampled

- You want to start a health program related to diabetes in Los Angeles.

Criterion Sampling

- All cases meet the certain criteria
- All cases are information rich
- Very helpful in measuring quality assurance—shows a system defect or weakness

- Study on causes of infection after medical abortion; criteria, women with an infection after a medical abortion

Stratified purposeful

- Helps to make comparisons
- Samples of different subsets
- Lends credibility to research

- If you want to study university students, pick a certain number of students from each of the 4 years (sample of freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and seniors)

Critical Case

- Looks at instances that will produce the most important information
- Must know what is a critical case
- Should have good applicability and logical generalization

- example: You want to know how well people understand a new tax law. Ask very educated people -- if they do not understand it, then probably no one will. Or ask a very uneducated population, if they understand it, most people will.

Opportunistic sampling

- Flexible; as new information is received the sampling group or site may change.
- See new chances to deepen or broaden the sample

- Example: interviewing homeless people at a shelter, one man tells you where most of the homeless people sleep, so you add this site to where you interview

Politically Important sampling

- Similar to critical case sampling
- Attracts attention to the research if desired OR deflects attention by eliminating politically sensitive samples
- Based on the political atmosphere at the time and place
- Information gained is relevant and may also aid in drawing attention to the subject for greater use and impact

- Example: Results regarding feelings about abortion in Spain. Find out feelings towards abortion but may also spark further political debate.

Volunteer sampling

- Sample is made up of people who ‘volunteer’ to be involved in research
- Usually done through advertising
- Helpful when the population you want to reach is divided throughout a community

- Example: Studying women about domestic violence and you ask them to phone a number
- Can be quite biased: only women who go to the places you advertise, who can read, with phones, with time, who think the research is important, who feel safe talking

Key Informant Sampling

- Provide deep, important information about what is happening in the community as a whole; knowledgeable, expert
- They have access to this information based on personal skills, profession, position in the community

Confirming or Disconfirming Sampling

- Usually done after some data has been collected and some analysis has been done
- It allows you to find more cases that add depth to the research and “confirm” the results
- OR
- Find cases that do not fit the expected results
  - Help researches find the limits of the study
  - Helps lend credibility to the study

Random Purposeful sampling

- Small, random sample when the group is too large
- Adds credibility to research
- Because the sample is small=>goal is credibility NOT representativeness or generalizability

- Example: study at a large drug rehabilitation center with 500 patients; the researcher randomly picks 50 without regard for success/failure

Combination or Mixed Purposeful

- Using more than one sampling technique
- Meet several needs of the research
- Makes the research more flexible
- Triangulation

Example: using snowball sampling until a critical case is found