

Chapter 12 Sampling and Data Collection in Qualitative Studies

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Sampling in Qualitative Research

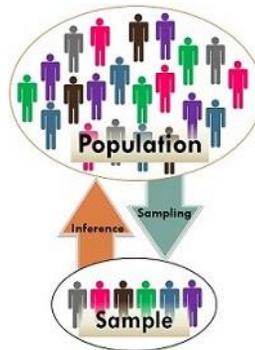
- Qualitative researchers are as concerned as quantitative researchers with the quality of their samples, but they use different considerations in selecting study participants.
- Selection of sample members is guided by a desire for [information-rich data sources](#)
- “Representativeness” not a key issue (Only Quantitative researchers are concerned about representativeness of the sample)
- Random selection is not considered productive



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Sampling and data collection

- In **quantitative research**, the goal would be to conduct a random sampling that ensured the sample group would be representative of the entire population, and therefore, the results could be generalized to the entire population.



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Sampling and data collection

- The goal of **qualitative research** is to provide in-depth understanding and therefore, targets a specific group, type of individual, event or process.



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Types of Qualitative Sampling

- **Convenience** (volunteer) sampling; not preferred approach but economical
- **Snowball sampling** (network sampling): sample might be restricted to a small network of acquaintances.
- **Purposive sampling**: researchers deliberately choose the cases that will best contribute to the study.
- **Theoretical sampling**: involves decisions about where to find data to develop an emerging theory optimally

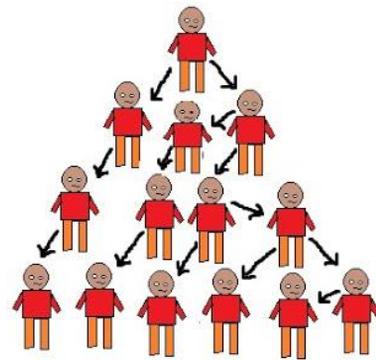
Convenience (volunteer) sampling

- Sampling by convenience is efficient, but is not a preferred approach, even in QL studies
- A convenience sample may not provide the most information-rich sources, and the **aim in QL studies** is to **extract the greatest possible information** from a small number of people
- However, convenience sampling may be an economical way to launch the sampling process.



Snowball sampling

- Also known as Network sampling or Chain Referral Sampling
- Researchers ask early informants to make referrals for other participants.
- Is used by researchers to identify potential in studies where subjects are hard to locate.



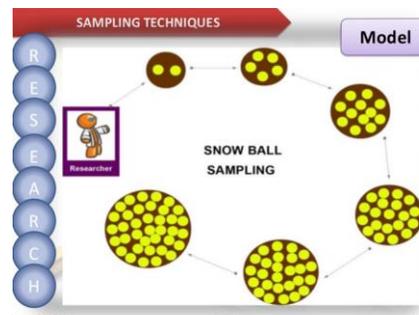
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Snowball sampling(continuing)

- Researchers use this sampling method if the sample for the study is very rare or is limited to a very small subgroup of the population
- This type of sampling technique works like chain referral.
- After observing the initial subject, the researcher asks for assistance from the subject to help identify people with a similar trait of interest.

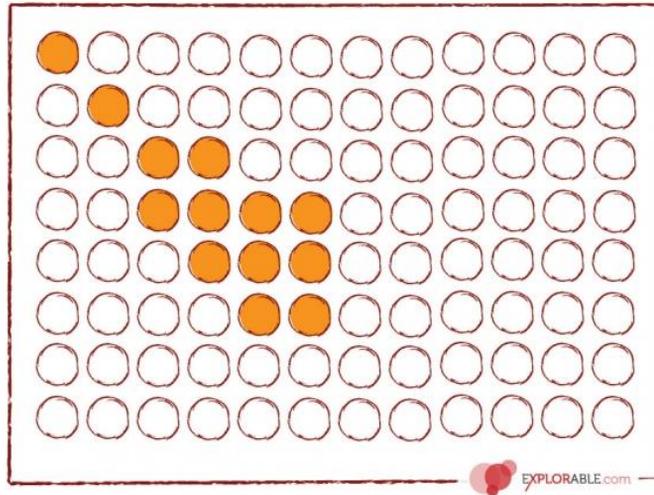


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Snowball sampling (continuing)



Purposeful Sampling

- Is the **most common** sampling strategy.
- In this type of sampling, participants are selected or sought after based on pre-selected **criteria based on the research question**.
- *For example*, the study may be attempting to collect **data from lymphoma patients** in a particular **city** or **county**.

Purposeful sampling (continuing)

- The sample size may be predetermined or based on **theoretical saturation**,
- which is the **point** at which the newly collected **no longer** provides **additional insights**.



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Types of Purposive Sampling in Qualitative Research

- Maximum variation sampling
- Extreme/deviant case sampling
- Typical case sampling
- Criterion sampling
- Confirming and disconfirming cases

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Purposeful:- Maximum variation sampling

- Maximum variation sampling, also known as heterogeneous sampling, is a purposive sampling technique used **to capture a wide range of perspectives relating to the thing** that you are interested in studying (in the example bellow → baldness)



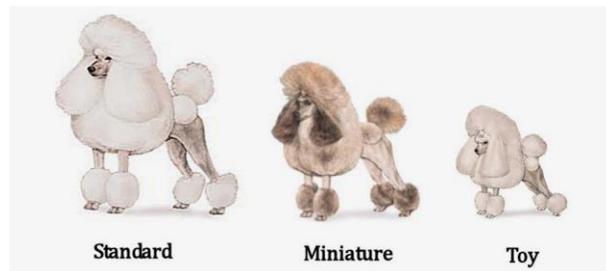
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Purposeful: - maximum variation sampling

- maximum variation sampling is a **search for variation in perspectives**, ranging from those conditions that are view to be typical through to those that are more extreme in nature.



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Purposeful - Maximum variation sampling

- The basic principle behind maximum variation sampling is to **gain greater insights into a phenomenon** by looking at it from all angles.
- This can often help the researcher to identify common themes that are evident across the sample.



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Purposeful: - Extreme/deviant case sampling

- Extreme (or deviant) case sampling is a type of purposive sampling that is used **to focus on cases that are special or unusual**, typically in the sense that the cases highlight notable outcomes, failures or successes.
- For example, if you were studying inner city violence, you could study a city with high violence and compare it to a city with low violence.



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Purposeful - Extreme/deviant case sampling

- These extreme (or deviant) cases are useful because they often **provide significant insight into a particular phenomenon**, which can act as lessons (or cases of best practice) that guide future research and practice.



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Purposeful - Extreme/deviant case sampling

- In some cases, extreme (or deviant) case sampling is thought to reflect the purest form of insight into the phenomenon being studied.
- Extreme or deviant case sampling means selecting cases that are unusual or special in some way, such as outstanding successes or notable failures.



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Purposeful - Typical case sampling

- Typical case sampling is a purposive sampling technique used **when you are interested in the normality/typicality** of the units (e.g., people, cases, events, settings/contexts, places/sites) you are interested, because they are normal/typical.



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Purposeful - Typical case sampling

- The word **typical does not mean** that the sample is **representative** in the sense of probability sampling
- (i.e., that the sample shares the same/similar characteristics of the population being studied).
-



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Purposeful - Typical case sampling

- Rather, the word **typical means** that the researcher has the ability to **compare the findings** from a study using typical case sampling **with other similar samples**
- (i.e., **comparing samples**, not generalising a sample to a population).



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Purposeful - Typical case sampling

- Therefore, with typical case sampling, you cannot use the sample to make generalizations to a population, but the **sample could be illustrative of other similar samples**.



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Purposeful – criterion sampling

- Criterion sampling involves selecting cases that meet some predetermined criterion of importance (Patton, 2001, p. 238).



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Purposeful – criterion sampling

- *For example:*
- Every patient at a practice receives a **satisfaction survey** at the end of his or her visit.
- Satisfaction with how the patient felt his or her primary reason for visit was handled is assess via a **5 point Likert scale** with 1 = 'not at all satisfied' and 5= 'extremely satisfied.'
- **To better understand** patients who are not satisfied with the care provided, the practice **calls and conducts a telephone interview** with all patients completing the survey who report a score of 2 or lower for this measure.



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Purposeful – criterion sampling

Why use this method?

- Criterion sampling can be **useful for identifying and understanding cases that are information rich**.
- Criterion sampling can provide an important qualitative component **to quantitative data**.
- Criterion sampling can be useful for **identifying cases** from a standardized questionnaire that might be useful for follow-up.

Purposeful - Confirming and disconfirming cases

- Is used **at the end of data collection**.
- After gathering initial data, exploring the data and identifying patterns, the evaluator will start to develop findings.
- Confirming and disconfirming cases **assist the evaluator** in the confirmatory fieldwork **stage of an evaluation**.

Purposeful - Confirming and disconfirming cases

- As researchers note trends and patterns in the data, emerging conceptualizations may need to be checked.
- **CONFIRMING** cases are additional cases that **fit** researchers' conceptualizations and **strengthen credibility**.
- **DISCONFIRMING** cases are new cases that **do not fit** and serve to challenge researchers' interpretations. (may offer new insights into how the original conceptualization needs to be revised.)

Theoretical Sampling

- Preferred sampling method in grounded theory research
- Involves selecting sample members who best facilitate and contribute to the development of the emerging theory

Theoretical sampling is a process of data collection for generating theory

the analyst jointly collects codes and analyses data and decides what data to collect next and where to find them, in order to develop a theory as it emerges.

What data to collect next?

What groups should the researcher turn to next? (to further the emerging theory)

Question

Tell whether the following statement is True or False.

Sampling in qualitative research is guided more by the desire for rich sources of information than by the need for random selection.

- a. True
- b. False

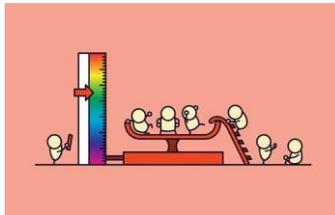
Answer

- a. True

Rationale: Selection of sample members for qualitative research is guided by the desire for information-rich sources. The representativeness of the sample is not a key aspect, and random selection is not considered productive.

Sample Size in Qualitative Research

- No explicit, formal criteria
- Sample size determined by informational needs
- Decisions to stop sampling guided by **data saturation**
- Data quality can affect sample size.



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Sampling in the Main Qualitative Traditions

- Ethnography
 - Mingling with many members of the culture—a “big net” approach
 - Informal conversations with 25 to 50 informants
 - Multiple interviews with smaller number of **key informants**
 - Typically involves sampling *things* as well as people



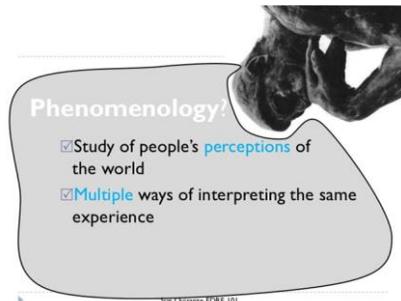
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Sampling in Phenomenology

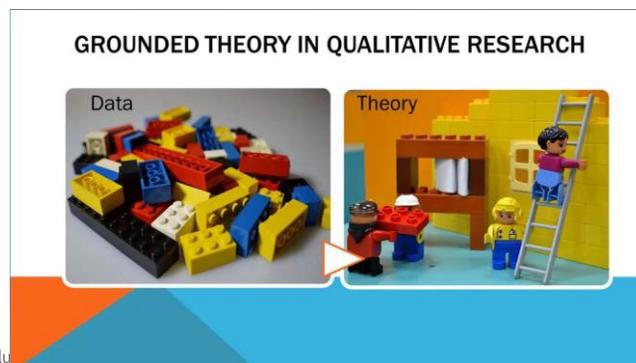
- Relies on very small samples (often 10 or fewer)
- Two principles guide sample selection
 - Participants must have experienced phenomenon of interest.
 - They must be able to articulate what it is like to have lived that experience.
- May sample artistic or literary sources



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Sampling in Grounded Theory

- Typically involves samples of 20 to 30 people
- Selection of participants who can best contribute to emerging theory (usually theoretical sampling)



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Data Collection in Qualitative Studies

- Data collection methods may change as study progresses.
- In-depth interviews most common method
- Observation also common

Comparison of Data Collection

TABLE 12.1 Comparison of Data Collection in Three Qualitative Traditions

Issue	Ethnography	Phenomenology	Grounded Theory
Types of data	Primarily observation and interviews, plus artifacts, documents, photographs, social network diagrams	Primarily in-depth interviews, sometimes diaries, other written materials	Primarily individual interviews, sometimes group interviews, observation, diaries, documents
Unit of data collection	Cultural system	Individuals	Individuals
Data collection points	Mainly longitudinal	Mainly cross-sectional	Cross-sectional or longitudinal
Length of time for data collection	Typically long, many months or years	Typically moderate	Typically moderate
Salient field issues	Gaining entrée, determining a role, learning how to participate, encouraging candor, loss of objectivity, premature exit, reflexivity	Bracketing one's views, building rapport, encouraging candor, listening while preparing what to ask next, keeping "on track," handling emotionality	Building rapport, encouraging candor, listening while preparing what to ask next, keeping "on track," handling emotionality

Types of Qualitative Self-Report Techniques

- **Unstructured interviews**
 - Conversational, totally flexible
 - Use of **grand tour questions**
- **Semistructured interviews**
 - Use of a **topic guide**

Grand Tour

- In this instance, Grand Tour questions included “show me your house” and “tell me about your experience with your roof.”
- This type of question allowed informants to provide information that specific questions may have failed to anticipate.
 - One example would be that North Bay informants chose their roof type as much for its thermal and insulative qualities, as for its cooling and reflective properties.

Types of Qualitative Self-Report Techniques—(cont.)

- **Focus group interviews**
 - Interviews in small groups (5 to 10 people)
 - Led by a **moderator**
- **Diaries**
 - Source in historical research
 - Provide intimate detail of everyday life



Types of Qualitative Self-Report Techniques—(cont.)

- **Photo elicitation**

- Interview stimulated and guided by photographic images
- Photovoice: asking participants to take photos themselves and interpret them



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Question

Tell whether the following statement is True or False.

A focus group typically involves at least 10 to 15 people.

- a. True
- b. False

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Answer

b. False

Rationale: A focus group usually involves interviews with small groups, ranging in size from 5 to 10 people.

Qualitative Observational Methods

- Qualitative studies: unstructured observation in naturalistic settings
 - Includes **participant observation**



Gathering Qualitative Self-Report Data

- Researchers gather narrative self-report data to develop a construction of a phenomenon that is consistent with that of participants.
- This goal requires researchers to overcome communication barriers and to enhance the flow of information.

Gathering Participant Observation Data

- The physical setting
- The participants
- Activities
- Frequency and duration
- Process
- Outcomes

Question

Tell whether the following statement is True or False.
In qualitative studies, observation is unstructured.

- a. True
- b. False

Answer

- a. True

Rationale: Observation with a qualitative study is unstructured and occurs in naturalistic settings.

Recording Observations

- **Logs (field diaries)**
- **Field notes**
 - **Descriptive (observational) notes**
 - **Reflective notes**
 - Methodologic notes
 - Theoretical notes (or analytical notes)
 - Personal notes

Evaluation of Unstructured Observational Methods

- Excellent method for capturing many clinical phenomena and behaviors
- Potential problem of **reactivity** when people are aware that they are being observed
- Risk of **observational biases**—factors that can interfere with objective observation