
Crim 321: Qualitative Research Methods

Study Questions for Hennink et al / Chapter 6

Sampling and Participant Recruitment

1. What is “purposive sampling,” and how does it differ from “probability sampling”?
2. Your text states that, “Quantitative research typically uses probability sampling, while qualitative research uses purposive sampling.” How come? How are those choices consistent with the priorities and objectives that are associated with each approach to research?
3. What do the authors of your text mean when they say you should build diversity into your sample? How might you go about doing that?
4. Howie Becker once said that the next person you interview should be the one who is most likely to provide new and deeper insights into whatever you are investigating, i.e., from whom can you learn the most? Do you think the authors of your text would agree with that sentiment?
5. What does “theoretical sampling” or “inductive sampling” involve?
6. Near the bottom of p.95, the text describes an example of inductive or theoretical sampling in a study done regarding hospital patients’ awareness of death. How did the process they followed exemplify the notion of “sampling for diversity” discussed in your text?
7. In quantitative research, you are urged to specify ahead of time who your population is and how you will sample in such a way as to maximize representativeness. Does inductive sampling follow the same logic? Explain.
8. Your text emphasizes the idea of articulating your sampling goals, and they list five: sampling for (1) maximum diversity; (2) homogeneity; (3) typical cases; critical cases; and (5) theory development. You should understand each of those; this also would be a good time to check out the Palys (2008) article on the course web page entitled “Purposive sampling,” which expands that list.
9. The text suggests that the way you enter a community will reflect your “positionality.” What exactly is that? And what might you have to watch out for?
10. “Sampling recruitment” refers to the way(s) you can go about contacting and encouraging the sample you seek to participate, and Table 6.2 (on pp.98-99) gives a good summary of some of those ways and the benefits and challenges associated with each. You should understand those.
11. “Gatekeepers” have always played a significant role in connecting researchers with communities. What exactly is a “gatekeeper” and what are the benefits of working with one? What challenges exist for the researcher when relying on a gatekeeper?

12. “Registers” are what would call a “sampling frame” insofar as it is they represent a complete list of all the people you might approach within some research site – a school, an organization, a club, a chat group, an institution. In theory, you could use such a list to identify a random and thus formally representative sample, which people who do quantitative research often think of as the “gold standard” for sampling. So why are the authors of your text less than enthused about using it in that way for a qualitative study?
13. A Master’s student I was supervising a few years ago is a member of the Oromo Indigenous people from Ethiopia. She was doing research related to the political aspirations of the Oromo people and was intending to go there to do her research when conflicts erupted between different groups in Ethiopia that meant it would be unsafe for her to go there at that time. She decided instead to visit a few of the larger (but still quite small) Oromo communities in Canada, particularly in Calgary, Toronto and Montréal. Although she knew some people in each community, she decided that the best way to connect with people would be to attend any Oromo festival or wedding she could get invited to in order to talk to people about her research and invite them to participate. What sort of recruitment strategy would your text consider that to be?
14. Many people that criminologists are interested in – e.g., clients of sex workers; police officers subjected to harassment by their colleagues and superiors; hockey players from minority communities of colour who are pushed away from the game by racist decision-making; offenders who have been released from prison – are not that easy to find. Snowball sampling (also known as “chain sampling”) is one technique through which you can often generate a participant sample. Explain what snowball sampling is, and what benefits and challenges come along with using it.
15. What does “saturation” refer to? What are some of the factors that influence when saturation is achieved? And what does that have to do with the question of determining how many people are “enough” for your research to be viable?