



Sampling in Qualitative Inquiry

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Rigor dictates that the sample be

Adequate

Appropriate

Rigor dictates that the sample be

- Adequate means having
 - Enough data to be *certain* of your results
 - Enough data to show the domain; the boundaries; the variation; the pattern and to enable understanding to theory development
- Data must replicate
 - Provide enough examples to allow for complete understanding of the concepts
 - Enable theoretical development

Rigor dictates that the sample be:

- Appropriate means having data that
 - Is targeted to those who have that information
 - Represents *in depth* the full range of variation
 - Enables recognition of the patterns
 - Dross is minimized; confusion limited

Sampling is always determined by the method

- Does your method focus on the individual?
 - This means LOTS of data per participant
- Does your method report on groups?
 - This means loss of data from clusters of participants
- Does your method report types of experiences?
 - This means lots of data from sets of participants

Sampling is always determined by the method

- Does your method delimit the setting?
- by family?
- by institution?
- by experience?

Sample is *ALWAYS*
determined by the method

- And the method is dictated by the research question

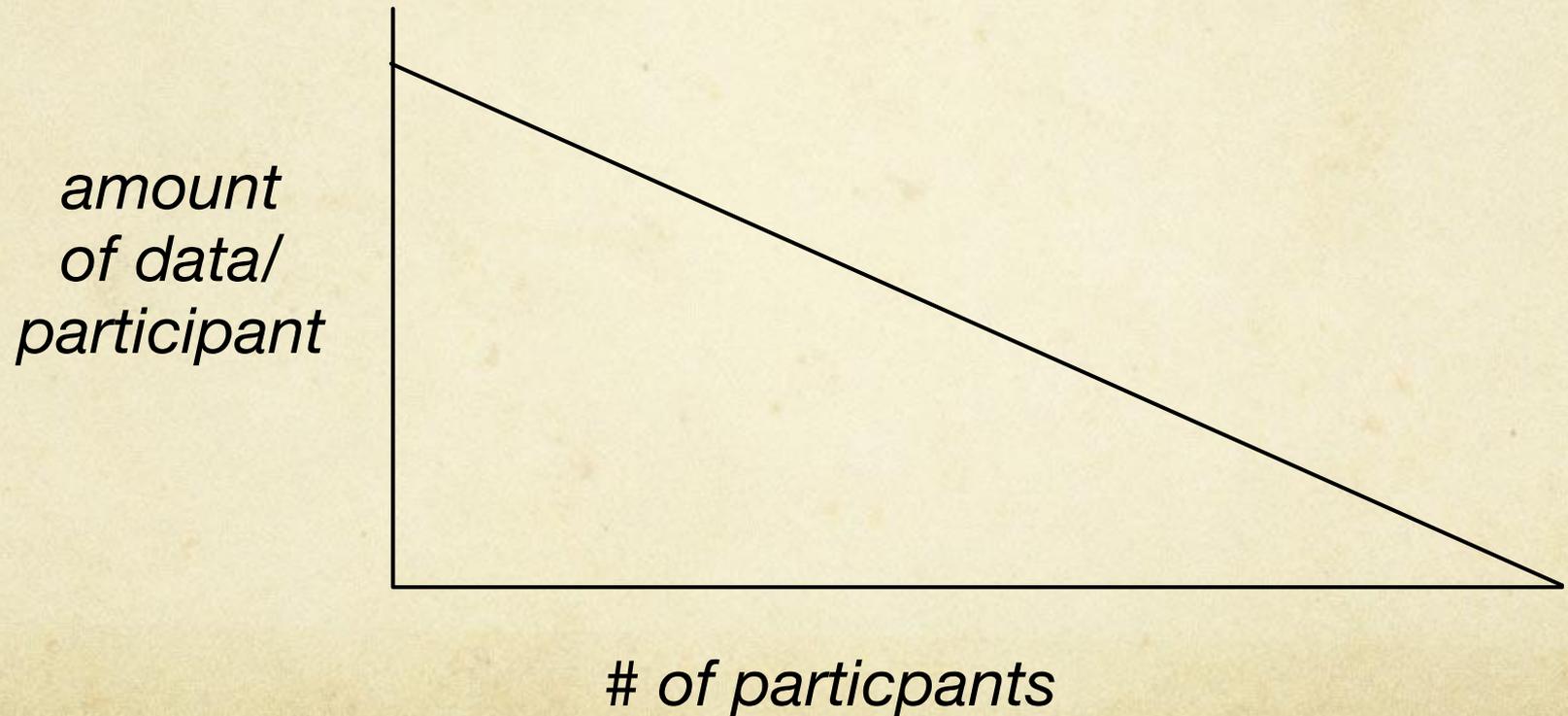
Sample is *ALWAYS* determined by the method

- Phenomenology
- Grounded theory
- Ethnography
- Evaluation research
- Observational research

Sample is ALWAYS determined by the method

- Number of data sources the methods provides
 - Observations + Interview?
 - Other data sources?
- Type and amount of interviews used
 - Unstructured interview
 - Guided interview
 - Semi-structured interview
 - Focus group interview
 - Conversational interview

The less data obtained from each participant, the larger the sample



Sampling Errors

- Researchers lack of responsiveness to research design in sampling selection
- In comparative designs, all subsamples (gender, ethnicity, males/females) that are compared **MUST** be saturated.

Sampling Errors

- Not using qualitative principles:
 - purposeful sampling,
 - theoretical sampling,
- Using randomization
- What is wrong with randomization??

Sampling Errors

- LACK OF DATA
- Skimpy data sets are more difficult of analyze; because the researcher cannot see the patterns emerging
- THREATENS RIGOR
- TAKES LONGER (and is frustrating)
- Weaker results

Sampling Errors

- Failure to consider participant characteristics
- Spradley's criteria of a good participants
 - Someone who:
 - Knows what you want to know
 - Has time and is willing to participate.
 - Is eloquent, reflective
 - In health care: *Can participate, speak, recall*

Consider *shadowed data*

- Participants may also report about others experiences
- Ask: Is this how it is for others?
 - “some do this , some do that”-- provides indicators for sampling frame
 - Examine text for “Us” & “Them” “Those” s
 - Interview observers—other family members, etc.

Use as many data sources as possible

- But remember that each data source set provided a different perspective,
- Each must be analyzed separately
 - Do not mix focus group data with unstructured interview data . . .and so forth
 - And later integrated.



Lets talk about
Saturation

Saturation is. . .

- Having both an adequate and appropriate sample
- It is NOT simple replication
- It is not a predetermined number
- It is not replicable (not determined from another study) because

Saturation depends on

- The question (scope, complexity, boundary)
- Quality of participants
- Type of method and interview type
- Skill of the researcher
- Method used

An individual's quotation may

- Represent only an aspect of the concept being discussed.
- It takes a group perspective to represent the concept in its completeness

THEREFORE quotations illustrate *your* description of the concept or phenomenon

The individual's text does not present your findings.

The researcher is responsible for presenting the analysis

Problems

- Not Saturated—One quotation only illustrates. It is not ‘evidence’.
- Data must be rich enough to enable the description of characteristics of each group, and enable accurate comparison

It is not possible. . .

...for the reader to determine comparison between groups from a single quotation/person's experience alone, not matter how exemplar-ish.

Saturation is supreme

Small samples - publication-demise

Hey—what about case studies?

- Yes
- Case studies usually used multiple sources of data presenting to the single case
- Case studies place that case within the literature
 - The literature forms the background for theoretical/group comparison

But

(& back to my topic)

- Without respecting
 - Your question
 - Sample adequacy
 - Design for comparison

Cultural differences cannot be ascertained.

**You are reporting only on the concept
itself**

The relationship between sampling and saturation

Problem 1:

A sample is “too small”

- Researcher is
 - Unable to identify patterns in these data
 - Lack of certainty
 - Unable to build concepts
 - Unable link concepts to build theory—research becomes difficult
 - *Cherry picking*: Overreliance on stories of the exception
 - Threats to validity—may even be wrong!!!
- **VIOLATES PRINCIPLES OF BOTH SMAPLING AND SATURATION**

For this reason QR does not
use pilot studies

PROBLEM 2:

Lack of internal analytic design

Comparative question=Comparative design

- ❖ When comparing, the question dictates the number of groups in your design—are you comparing cultural groups, genders, ages?
- ❖ The sample for each group must be *appropriate*
- ❖ Data for each group must be *adequate*
- ❖ These demographics first dictate data analysis—Then content analysis/thematic analysis

THE SOLUTION:

Reflexivity

- Of course you may circle back
- And that is what purposeful sampling is all about

Discovering new characteristics in your data, may mean altering your sampling frame

That is why most qualitative methods simultaneously collect data and analyze data.

PROBLEM 3:

Thematic Analysis

- Themes, running right through the interview—and other's interviews—may not respect participant characteristics

(more easily controlled in content analysis)

SOLUTION: Segment data according to your comparative questions.

Do you have adequate, appropriate data?

One quotation is not adequate evidence

- Researchers must describe categories with rich, interpretative description.
- Participant quotations cannot stand alone
- They must be used to *illustrate*, not to present the emerging analysis.

It is not possible. . .

...for the reader to determine comparison between groups from a single quotation/person's experience alone, not matter how exemplar-ish.

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CONSIDER: How does your method group data?

- As Individuals
- Families
- Separate dyads (Nurse-patient)
- Associated groups (nurses, patients, doctors)
- Roles (Managers, nurses, aides, secretaries, cleaning staff)
- Illnesses (Diabetics, compliant, noncompliant)
- **Q: What level of saturation must each group be, in order for your findings to be saturated?**

The most common reason for rejection is

- Inadequate and inappropriate data

Publishing

- How to publish
- Preparing manuscripts
- QHR
- GQNR