

## Qualitative Sampling

Applicable for those of us who range from positivist to constructivist.

Distinct from quantitative sampling.

*Who should be sampled?* **Intensity sampling** – one selects participants who are experiential experts and authorities about particular experiences – a particular “text” under construction – reflect the greatest intensity. These are individuals that have: **1.** great knowledge on the subject, **2.** able to articulate that knowledge to you, and **3.** who have the time and willingness to participate in the collaboration. For example, to learn about the “Sun Dance,” the “text,” interview the “medicine man” running the ceremony. Identify such participants via participant-observation and inquiring from other interviews.

*How do I get an insiders perspective* – who do the people in a given community identify as “authorities”? **Snowball sampling** – a form of intensity sampling in which ask interviewees or participants who they think are the “most informed and knowledgeable” on a given subject. Great question to ask participants – who would you go to obtain such and such help? Identify via participant-observation and inquiring from other interviews.

*What if there are gaps in the “text” not well understood by the authorities?* In a give away, while officiated by men, organized by women. Men know very little about how it all comes together. **Critical case sampling** – another form of intensity sampling in which select participant based on contributing some aspect of a given topic not available from other participants. May not be the “most informed” for the general subject, but have specialized knowledge on a particular aspect. For example, in researching the Memorial Give Away, need to understand the role of the designated hunters and the cooks who prepare the venison. While each may have little general understanding of the larger event, they have key knowledge on sundry aspects. Identify via participant-observation and snowballing from other interviews.

*How do you identify the parameters of a given text* – what should be included in the text and what is outside? **Maximum variety sampling** – unlike intensity sampling, deliberately select a

heterogeneous sample and then observe similarities and differences in their experiences, isolating a given text. Also useful in describing the unique and “exceptions to the rule” cases – the variations that oscillate around a given text.

*How large should the sample be?* Continue to sample as long as new insights are obtained and until reach “**theoretical saturation**” of the text. As sampling is done relative to consideration of “text construction,” saturation refers to, **1.** the point at which any subsequent interviews do not reveal addition insights into or deviancies from the “text.” **2.** You have reached a point when the breadth – range and variation has been explored – as well as the depth – the meaningful significance of the singular text is obtained. And **3.** as text construction is collaborative endeavor, the saturation point is marked when a general consensus on these two previous points are researched by all key participants involved.

So that sampling continues as “text” is being constructed – a “**gradual selection**” process, and not completed before you put the text together. Your collecting, coding, analyzing, collaborating and writing all are occurring at the same time.

In addition, you are not sampling to find a “representative” number of cases reflective of the larger population. Your **sample is text-based** and not representative-based.