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# Researching Crime & Justice

## Session 7 - Exercises

### Sample Designs

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## Aims & Content

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- Introduce the key considerations and practical constraints affecting sampling processes
  - Key issues we should always consider when designing a sampling strategy
- Discuss the design of sampling strategies for different research questions
  - Two sampling strategies suggested by me
  - Two sampling strategies you were asked to design
  - Two more examples to discuss together if we have time

## What to Consider when Designing a Sampling Strategy?

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- The following are a list of key features that should be carefully considered when designing a sampling strategy
- Crucially, this is not a unidirectional flowchart, instead these features are interconnected
- Which is your population of interest?
  - Could be people, crimes, news articles, streets, etc.
  - Identify where and when
  - If the population is not correctly identified everything that follows will be flawed



## What to Consider when Designing a Sampling Strategy?

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- Is there a sampling frame available?
  - I.e. a list of members of the population with contact details
- If there is not a sampling frame available, could you create your own?
  - Could you find out who the individuals in the population are?
  - Could you identify the clusters where they 'operate'?
  - e.g. university students within student halls, university staff within office rooms, homeless people within shelter homes
- If the answer is no and no, your choice is limited to non-probability methods

# What to Consider when Designing a Sampling Strategy?

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- Mode of data collection
  - Face to face is very time-consuming, but provides high engagement
  - Web-based questionnaires have practically null marginal costs, but response rates are low
- Sample size
  - There is not a golden number
  - Consider the criteria set out before
  - As a rule of thumb you could take academic research on a similar topic as an upper bound
  - Most importantly, consider how much work will be involved in collecting and analysing additional cases
- Consider any other potential constraints, such as ethics, or doing fieldwork during a pandemic
  - Online methods are a good option in some of those circumstances

## Exercise

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- For this week's session you are asked to design a sampling strategy on the following questions
  - Do academic staff at the University of Leeds ESSL (Education, Social Sciences and Law) faculty consider that free speech is not upheld in University campuses in the UK?
  - What if the population of interest was all academics in the UK?
- When designing your sampling strategies consider the following
  - Assume this is the fieldwork that you will undertake in your dissertation (affected by resource, time and ethical constraints)
  - Consider whether you could get access to a sampling frame, or create your own
  - Identify and justify your sampling method, mode of data collection (face-to-face, mail questionnaire, telephone, web questionnaire, etc.) and roughly your target sample size
  - When justifying your choices consider criteria such as cost-effectiveness, and potential errors affecting validity (bias) and reliability (sampling error)
- Let's see how to this with a couple of examples



## Example 1

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- Project on the influence of the media on punitive populism
  - Imagine we want to explore newspapers' reports of offenders sentenced in court to test the following hypothesis
  - References to personal mitigating factors (genuine remorse, caring responsibilities, mental disability, etc.) in the printed media were more frequent ten years ago than nowadays
  - Hence, the rise in punitive populism in the United Kingdom can be attributed - at least to some degree - to changes in the British media

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- Here is how I would proceed to compose a sampling strategy for such a project
  - Population: news articles on crime printed in the UK in 2010 and 2020
  - Sampling method: Stage 1, choose the three broadsheet and three tabloid newspapers with a high readership over the last decade
  - Sampling method: Stage 2, run a search using keywords such as ‘crime’, ‘criminal’, select at random three articles from 2010 and three from 2020 for each newspaper
  - Sampling frame: Library archive
  - Sample size:  $3(\text{articles}) \cdot 6(\text{newspapers}) \cdot 2(\text{timeperiods}) = 36$  articles to be analysed
  - Mode of data collection: This would not be a survey but rather an example of document analysis
- Remember, this is just one of multiple valid sampling strategies that could be suggested





## Example 2

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- Every summer residents from Hyde Park (Leeds) celebrate the ‘Hyde Park Unity Day Festival’
- This is a ‘grass-root’ event locally organised by Hyde Park residents only advertised through ‘mouth to mouth’
- Offers a great opportunity to assess the effectiveness of bottom up citizen organisation
- Imagine you want to explore the following research questions
  - How did participants learn about the 2021 festival?
  - What was the personal relationship (friend, neighbour, family, etc.) with those who let them know about the festival?



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- Here is how I would proceed to compose a sampling strategy for such a project
  - Population: participants of the 2021 'Hyde Park Unity Day Festival'
  - Sampling method: it is probably impossible to create a sampling frame of the population, hence we are limited to non-probability sampling methods
  - Sampling method: we do not know anything about the population either so we cannot use quota sampling
  - Sampling method: our only choice is convenience sampling during the festival
  - Sample size: as many as could be captured after say five to seven hours of fieldwork (100?)
  - Mode of data collection: face-to-face
- Remember, this is just one of multiple valid sampling strategies that could be suggested

## Exercise 1: Sample Design

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- Discuss the sampling strategies that you designed to explore:
  - Do academic staff at the University of Leeds ESSL (Education, Social Sciences and Law) faculty consider that free speech is not upheld in University campuses in the UK?
  - What if the population was all academics in the UK?
- Present your strategies by identifying the following
  - Whether a sampling frame was used
  - Sampling method
  - Sample size
  - Mode of data collection (face-to-face, mail questionnaire, telephone, etc.)
- Assuming the typical constraints affecting MSc dissertations apply (e.g. time, money, etc.)



## Exercise 2: Bonus Research Questions

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- Design an effective sampling strategy for the following research questions:
  - What is the main cause of homelessness reported by those sleeping rough in Leeds?
  - What is the rate of burglary victimisation amongst university students in Leeds in 2019?
- Remember that often there is no ‘one best’ strategy, but a range of ‘ok’ strategies
- Potential sampling strategies to explore these questions will be uploaded to Minerva



# Recap

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- If you already have a research question for your proposal now is the time to start thinking about your sampling strategy
  - Remember to start by considering which is your population
  - Whether a sampling frame is available or could be created
  - The pros and cons of your choice of sampling method(s)
- If you use secondary data you can skip all of the above
  - You can simply point at the sampling strategy used by the organisation who collected the data
  - E.g. the CSEW sampling strategy is published [here](#)
- To learn more about sampling I recommend,
  - Bachman, R, (2014) Chapter 5 - Sampling (available on Minerva)
  - Bryman (2017) Chapter 8 (available online at the library)

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- Next week you will cover ‘Ethics’ with Matt
- Just like sampling, one of the most important parts of the module
  - Integral to all empirical research, especially qualitative
  - Imposing important constraints on what can and cannot be done
- To prepare for next session read
  - Bryman (2016) chapter 6 ‘Ethics and politics in social research’ (available online at the library)
  - Noddings (2013) chapter 1 ‘Why care about caring’ (available on Minerva).