

Sizing up the Sample: Interviews, Damned Interviews and Statistics

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Overview

- studied influence of actors in economic reforms in Jamaica
- field interviews with policy elites

BUT

- what is the right sample size?
- how do we know it?

- **argument:** interviewers should focus on saturation, not sample size

Two Data Utilities

- data have two uses:
 - *inform* us of what we don't know
 - *confirm* what we think we know

- best information → interview data
- best confirmation → statistical data

- generally true for qual and quant data

Assumptions

- Truthiness in inferential stats
 - makes *a priori* truth statement / hypothesis
 - tries to confirm likelihood of truth statement, given data

- Unknowingness in interview analysis
 - truth statement made after analysis
 - avoids confirmation bias in interpretation

- Formal assumptions, but informally different

Sample Sizing

- Calls for making qual more rigorous (Achen & Snidal, Geddes 1990, Lieberman 1992, KKV 1994)
- reflect bias toward confirmation utility, large-N studies

BUT

- for interviews
 - sample unit (interviewee) \neq population observation (meaning)
 - not independent & identical
- E.g. from research: learning about Caucus w/out interviewing Caucus

Contextualizing

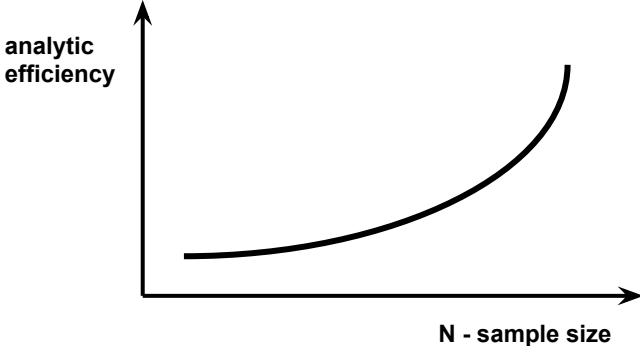
- interviewee misinformation can be informative
- interviewers should pay attention to context
- data are embedded in social world, not abstracted from it

Contextualizing: Power Heuristic

- e.g. from research: contextualising forms of capital
 - technocratic/ideological
 - regulatory/managerial
 - financial/productive
 - reputational/network power
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- IMF's technocratic and reputational capital shape influence

Optimizing Data Collection

Analytic Efficiency of Statistical Data



Analytic Efficiency of Interview Data

