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A Book Review by

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Sampling and Choosing Cases in Qualitative Research: A Realistic Approach

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Emmel, N. (2013). *Sampling and choosing cases in qualitative research: A realistic approach*. New Delhi: Sage. \$52.00

Nick Emmel elaborated an original text focusing on qualitative research sampling in social sciences. In such a field, a substantial debate is held about how to consider samples and cases, and how to interpret, discuss and generalize findings. Emmel tries in his book to relate sampling to cases in qualitative research from a realistic standpoint.

If we consider the book's external analysis, it is divided into two parts; the first contains three chapters and the second includes six chapters. The author divides the work into nine chapters preceded by an introduction entitled "From Sampling to Choosing Cases". A 172 pages work offers a real guide to students, post-graduate students and researchers who adopt realism in their qualitative research. The author has diachronically used a noteworthy number of references that stems from 1855 to 2013.

In his first part, Emmel has gone through a detailed account of grounded theory and through diverse traditions; from positivism to constructivism in qualitative research. In this three-chapter part, the author introduces a case of theoretical sampling in qualitative research in each chapter. He starts by the presentation of theoretical sampling in grounded theory through Glaser and Strauss' (1965) Awareness of Dying and presents its development and the progress of sampling in Grounded Theory. To carry on his cases, Emmel moves to purposeful sampling that arises from applied evaluation research in his second chapter. The author describes here the existing 14+1 purposeful sampling strategies before and during conducting research. In the third and last chapter, Emmel adds the third case to reflect on theoretical or purposive sampling. In this last chapter of part I, the author evokes the presence of the author in research, sampling decisions and the considerable intellectual work of the researcher to make sampling decisions. All in all, this case implies strategies of induction and interpretation based on the intellectual work of the researcher.

As for the second part of the book, Emmel introduces the realistic approach to sampling as a methodology applicable to social sciences. The author tries to consider choosing cases in scientific realistic qualitative research. In chapter four, Emmel details the discussion on scientific realism via the five propositions initiated in the introduction. Then, he moves to reflect on purposive work in a realist

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sampling strategy through a number of illustrations of cases that contributed in theory revision, elaboration and reconstruction; things detailed in chapter five. In the sixth chapter, the author carries on explaining how a researcher can choose his cases purposefully in a realist sampling strategy given the importance of cases in social contexts of particular kinds. Here, emphasis is made on how to construct an inductive case in a realistic approach, how to frame devices of a purposeful sample and how to transform it into cases. Emmel considers the changes a sample can go through as research progresses using three cases where he explains the importance of the researcher's ideas to bring interpretations to cases and how this researcher can move from a sample to cases and create relationships. In such a transformation from purposive to purposeful choices, there is a move to interpretation and explanation in a realist sampling strategy to which Emmel devotes his seventh chapter. Here, he regards how diverse social contexts generate particular outputs in sampling given the differences we can have in terms of the nature of the group and the access type of the group or the individual. From these lines of thought, sampling can be difficult to generalize, data difficult to gather and interpret, access to the sample difficult, sample unrepresentative are all challenges emphasized in this chapter. Another challenge Emmel represents; an issue under debate, is the sample size in qualitative research. Given its importance, the author devotes the eighth chapter for its sake. Aspects of small samples, number of cases, making the sample work are treated. In addition, practical problems of data collection, analysis and reporting are made clear followed by a section about how to move from cases to claiming. Following the gist of realist sampling strategies, the author ends the book with how to choose cases in qualitative research in a methodological and practical way. This makes the core of chapter nine where Emmel makes an overview of the major points discussed throughout the book going from realism, to purposive work and purposeful choices of cases and ending with cases.

In a nutshell, the book remains a valuable piece that completes the body of literature in qualitative research mainly dealing with the issue of sampling. It is original since few works dealt with the movement from sampling to casing in realistic qualitative research. Its unique content; simplified through rich illustrations and simple language, makes the reader able to understand qualitative research and sampling strategies within it in social sciences.