

# Data Collection and Analysis for Migration Studies

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## Choosing and mixing methods

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- Introduction
- Overview of methods in migration studies
- Methodology vs methods
- Qualitative and quantitative approaches
- Mixing methods:
  - Why
  - How
  - Challenges
- Two examples of mixed methods studies
- Choosing (mixed) methods for your own research

*Methods are specific techniques used to collect and analyse information or data.”*

*(Castles, 2012: 7)*

# Methods in migration studies

- Analysis of register data
- Surveys
- Ethnography
- In-depth interviews , expert interviews
- Focus groups
- Archival methods
- Content analysis / discourse analysis (eg policy documents, newspapers, novels, movies)
- Experiments
- Scenario analysis

*“Methodology is about the underlying logic of research [...] [It] involves the systematic application of epistemology [philosophy of knowledge] to research situations”  
(Castles, 2012: 7)*

Researchers differ in their ideas about:

- What should be studied (meanings, regularities)
- What can be studied (objective reality?)
- The extent to which research influences the object of study
- The role of researchers and research ‘subjects’ in the production of knowledge

# Quantitative and qualitative divide?

In groups of four,  
sort the characteristics on the colour coded cards in:

- Quantitative approaches
- Qualitative approaches
- Both

## General aims:

- Determining strength and statistical significance of relations
- Determining frequencies/prevalence

## Strengths

- Useful for studying large numbers of people
- Information on strength of relations, prevalence of phenomena also beyond the sample (generalisation) - *but only if sample was representative!*
- Easier to control for a range of confounding factors providing clear view on main relation of interest
- Results less dependent on researcher?

## Weaknesses

- Categories chosen by researcher may not reflect respondents' understandings
- May overlook relevant factors not included in existing theory, (not flexible)



# Qualitative methods

## General aims:

- Studying interplay of factors
- Determining types
- Understanding how target population sees/experiences/interprets their life or aspects of it

## Strengths

- Closer to the categories that the respondents themselves use and meanings they attach
- Rich information on context
- Flexible: insights occurring during data collection can be used to adapt original research plan
- Closer relation with stakeholders

# Qualitative methods

## Weaknesses:

- Data collection and analyses are very time-consuming if the sample size is large
- Statistical generalization beyond sample often not possible
- Researcher has larger influence on results

The choice of research methods depends on

- What you believe can be known (regularities, constructions?)
- What you want to know (Research question about frequencies, meanings, causal relations?)
- Theory (enough for deductive studies? input for operationalisation?)
- Accessibility of the target population
- Sensitivity of the topic

# Mixing methods: why?

- *Triangulation*: same question, different methods
- *Facilitation/development*: inform other method
- *Complementarity*: different sorts of information
- *Initiation*: discovering paradoxes and contradictions that lead to reframing of RQ
- *Appeal to different audience*

Sources: Hammersley, 1996; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Gamlen, 2012.

# Mixing methods: how?

## Sequencing

- Qualitative research after quantitative
- Quantitative after qualitative
- Simultaneously

## Sampling

- Same respondents, different respondents
- Same cases, different cases

Sources: Hammersley, 1996; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Gamlen, 2012.

# Mixing methods: how?

## Research question

- Same (research) question, different aspects of broader question

## Range of methods

- Several qualitative or several quantitative methods

# Mixed methods: challenges

- Paradigmatic incompatibility?
- Researcher needs multi-method skills (or multi-method research team)
- Expensive & time-consuming
  - Can use different methods across different studies
- Difficult to analyse
- Contradictory results
- Difficult to publish

Sources: Bryman, 2007; Hammersley, 1996; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Gamlen, 2012.

**Research question:** “to what extent and in what way [do] national integration policies impact immigrants’ identification patterns?” (p908)

**Two methods:** survey and in-depth interviews



# Ersanilli & Saharso: Survey

**Role of theory:** Deductive (hypothesis testing)

**Aim of inquiry:** Determining (relative) frequencies,  
uncovering perceptions, generalising

**Sampling:** random representative sample (N=794)

**Position of researcher?**

# Ersanilli & Saharso: Survey

**Operationalisation of identity:** based on J.W. Berry's two-dimensional model of 'acculturation'; settlement country orientation and origin country orientation as two separate, independent, dimensions.

## Measurement:

- survey questions about different identities:
  - Settlement country
  - Origin country
  - Muslim
  - Place of residence (1 item)
  - Europe (1 item)
- Same questions and answer categories for all respondents
- Bilingual interviewers & bilingual questionnaire

# Ersanilli & Saharso: Survey

## Questions:

1. To what extent do you feel connected to [group members]”?
2. To what extent do you feel [group member]”?
3. To what extent do you feel proud of being [group members]”?

## Answer scale:

1. Not at all
2. Barely
3. Somewhat
4. Largely
5. Completely

# Ersanilli & Saharso: Interviews

## Role of theory:

**Aim of inquiry:** Uncovering causal mechanisms, uncovering perceptions, generalising?

**Sampling:** mostly subgroup of respondents from survey (N=57)

**Position of researcher?**

# Ersanilli & Saharso: mixed methods

## Approach to mixing:

- What for?
- How? (*sequencing, relation between samples/cases in the different phases?*)

**Relation between data analyses from different methods?**

**Added value of mixing?**

**How could it have been improved?**

## Research questions:

- How do states relate to their emigrants and their descendents?
- Why do they do this in different ways?
- How should they do so ‘better’?

## Methods:

- Survey on state-diaspora relations: mostly based on literature review (64 countries)
- In-depth case studies
  - Ireland: elite interviews, archival work (?)
  - New Zealand: elite interviews, observations, archival work, survey of diasporas (18,000 respondents)

## Approach to mixing:

- What for?
- How? (*sequencing, relation between samples/cases in the different phases?*)

## Use of theory in different phases?

- Survey
- Case studies

**To what extent can results from the different methods be generalised?**

**Strengths of mixed method design?**

**Problems with mixed method design?**



# Mixing methods: key points

- Quantitative and qualitative methods are not incompatible, though certain epistemologies might be
- Mixing methods can provide valuable insights
- Appropriateness of using mixed methods depends on research question
- Not always necessary to use mixed methods within the same study

# Your own research: choosing methods

For your own dissertation research, think about:

- What kind of information are you looking for? (aim of inquiry)
- What is the role of theory in your study?
- What methods you could use? Why?
- How could you introduce a mixed methods element to your study
  - Would this be to triangulate, facilitate, complement, initiate?
  - What would the sequencing be?
  - Would you use the same or different samples/cases?

# References

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