Data Collection and Analysis for Migration Studies
MSc Public Policy & Human Development, Maastricht School of Governance

Choosing and mixing methods
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Programme

• Introduction
• Overview of methods in migration studies
• Methodology vs methods
• Qualitative and quantitative approaches
• Mixing methods:
  o Why
  o How
  o 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 (e.g., 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
Quantitative methods

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?

Adapted from Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004;
Quantitative methods

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

Adapted from Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004;
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

Adapted from Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004;
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

Adapted from Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004;
Choosing a method

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

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

**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
Role of theory: Deductive (hypothesis testing)

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

Sampling: random representative sample (N=794)

Position of researcher?
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
Role of theory:

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

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

**Position of researcher?**
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
  o Would this be to triangulate, facilitate, complement, initiate?
  o What would the sequencing be?
  o Would you use the same of different samples/cases?


