

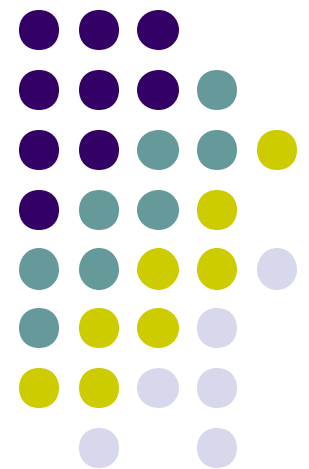
Qualitative and Mixed Methods in Poverty and Inequality Analysis

Michael Woolcock

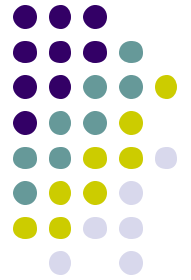
Development Research Group

Module II, Poverty and Inequality Course

March 13, 2002



Overview



1. Session One: Contexts
 - Why measure?
 - What “measures” cannot do
 - Questions, methodologies, methods, data
 - Types of methods and data
2. Session Two: Qualitative methods
 - Focus groups, key informant interviews, observation
 - Case studies and ‘analytic narratives’
3. Session Three: Strategies for mixing methods
 - Economic sociology (micro)
 - Comparative politics (macro)
4. Session Four: Operational examples
 - Guatemala Poverty Assessment
 - Survival and mobility strategies in Delhi Slums
 - St Lucia Social Assessment
5. Concluding thoughts



1. Why measure?

- Testing questions, assumptions, theories with data
- Reconciling conflicting empirical claims
- Discerning size and nature of project impact
- Helping make hard choices among alternatives
- Tracking resource flows
- Creating “political space” for practitioners
 - Human Development Index
 - Governance, Human Rights indicators



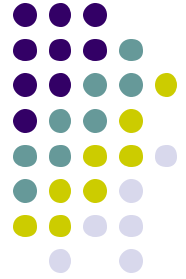
2. The limits of “measurement”

- Questions should drive choice of methods and measurement tools (not vice versa)
- Social science data is always partial, an imperfect reflection of a more complex underlying reality
- Data can be manipulated for political purposes
- Some (very important) things cannot be measured—love, God, identity, meaning
- “Not everything that can be counted, counts”
- “It’s better to be vaguely right than precisely wrong”
- “Triangulation”—integrating more abundant, more diverse, and higher-quality evidence

3. Questions, Methodologies, Methods, Data

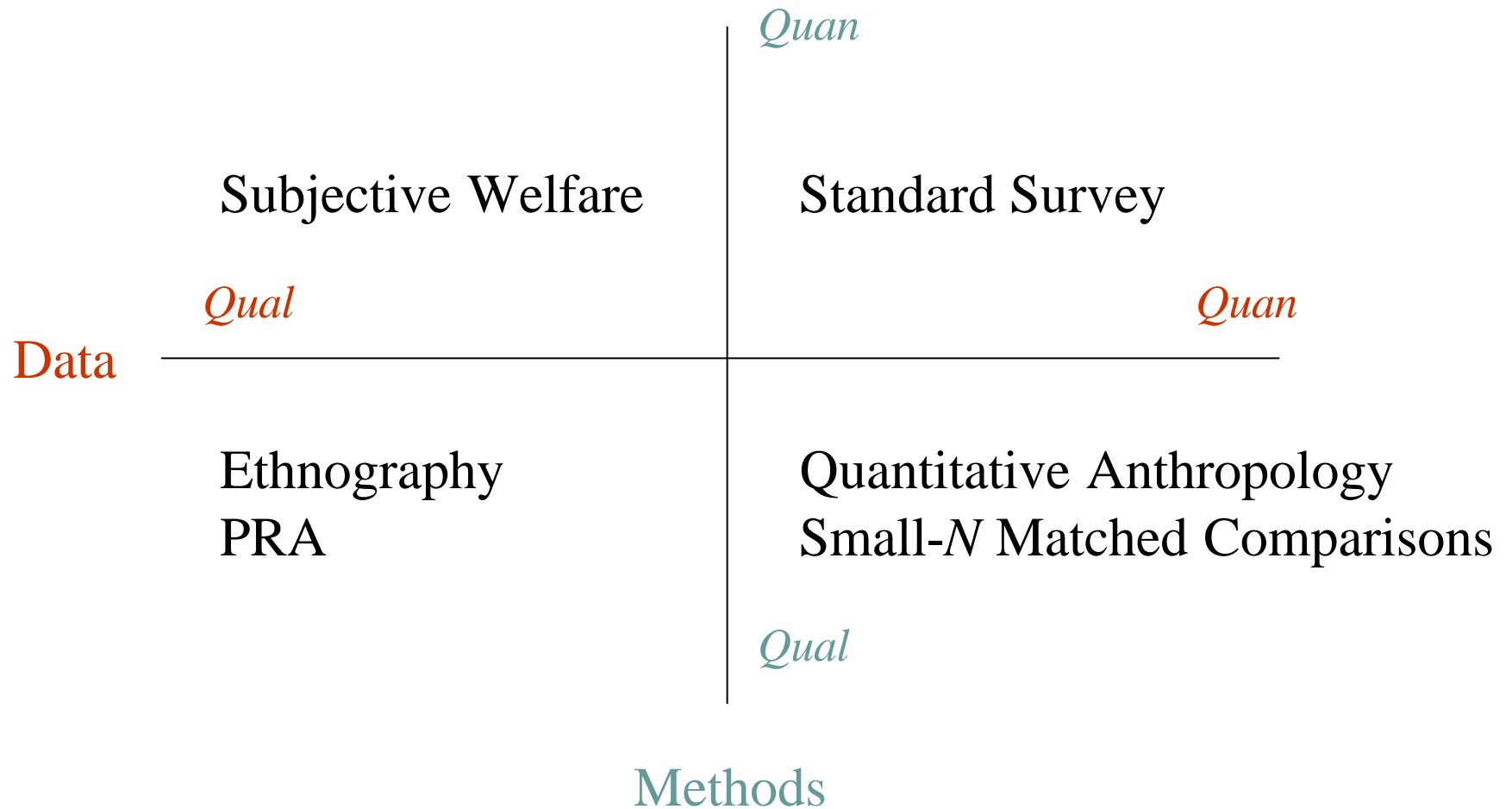


- Begin with interesting and important *questions*; “the most important questions of method begin where the standard techniques do not apply” (C Wright Mills)
 - Finding answers may require single or multiple methods and data forms—need to be a good detective
 - Difficult to do when one has invested many years in mastering particular techniques—“Everything looks like a nail when all you have is a hammer”
- *Methodologies* as the particular combination and sequence of *methods* used to answer the question(s)
- *Methods* can be qualitative and/or quantitative
- *Data* can also be qualitative and/or quantitative

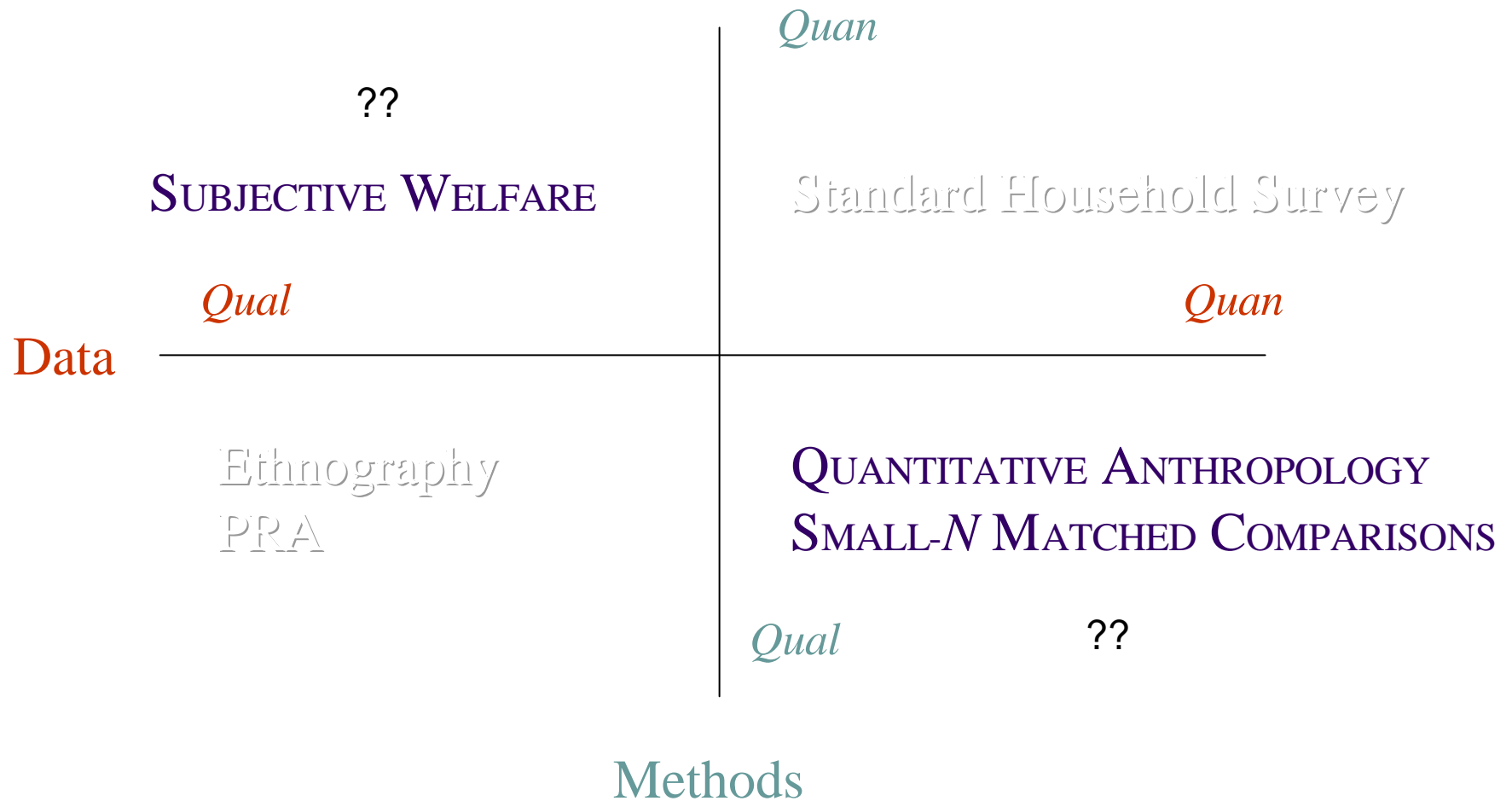


- Qual/quant disputes often stem from...
 1. Conflating methods and data
 2. Mismatches between question, methods and data
 3. Assumptions that different “standards” apply
 - Qualitative approaches seen as
 - inductive, valid, subjective, process (‘how’), generating ideas
 - Quantitative approaches seen as
 - deductive, reliable, objective, effects (‘whether’), testing ideas
 - Not necessarily...
- Integrating qual and quan approaches...
 - Iterative and/or sequential mixing of approaches to
 - Complement strengths, compensate weaknesses
 - Address problems of missing/inadequate data

Types of Data and Methods



4. How to integrate Qual data and Quan methods? (& vv)

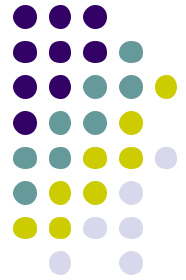


Common goals of quan and qual methods



- Comparability across time and space
- Sensible aggregation and disaggregation
 - Across different scales and units of analysis
 - (How to find a common metric, like “prices”?)
- Sensible integration of different data forms and sources
- Enhanced Validity
 - Selected measures approximate “reality”
 - Minimizing identification (and other) errors
- Enhanced Reliability
 - Same procedures, different team should give same results

5. Sources of data



- *Quantitative (“numbers”)*
 - Household and other surveys (e.g., census, LSMS)
 - Opinion polls (e.g., Gallup, marketing research)
 - Data from official files (e.g., membership lists, government reports)
 - Indexes created from multiple sources (e.g., “governance”)
- *Qualitative (“texts”)*
 - Historical records, political reports, letters, legal documents
 - Media (print, radio, and television)
 - **Open-ended responses to survey questions**
 - **Observation (ethnography)**
 - **Interviews—key informants, focus groups**
 - Participatory approaches—PRA, etc
- *Comparative (“cases”)*
 - ‘Rare’, ‘small-*N*’ events
 - wars, economic crises
 - distinctive countries (e.g. East Asia) or organizations (IMF)

Qualitative Methods and Poverty/Inequality Analysis



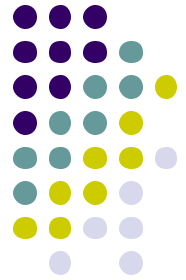
- Open-ended responses to HH survey questions
- Observation (ethnography)
 - Observer as participant
 - Participant as observer
- Interviews
 - Key informants
 - People in illegal/difficult/stigmatized circumstances
 - E.g., drug traffickers, disaster survivors, sex workers
 - Main players, important decision makers
 - Policymakers, executives to village chiefs, local religious leaders
 - Focus groups
 - Members share similar or deliberately diverse characteristics
 - Seek consensus on complex issues

Qual, causality, and generalization



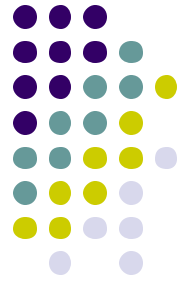
- Trade-offs for *all* research:
 - generality, parsimony, accuracy, causality
- Qual researchers often select...
 - on the dependent variable (e.g., “globalization”)
 - non-representative, “extreme”, cases
- Familiar quan principles still apply
 - Need counterfactual, “control group”
 - Very problematic to deal with, but addressing
- What to do?
 - No standardized solution, but...

Qual, causality, and generalization

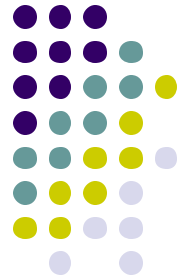


- Selecting cases for comparison
 - What is a “case”? Unit of analysis is crucial for the nature of the causal claims that are then made (countries, organizations, groups, individuals)
 - If random assignment and/or control groups aren’t possible, then select cases that are
 - Very similar, and try to find differences
 - Very different, and try to find similarities
- One variation: “Differences within differences”
 - Select different cases (e.g. regions of economic success and failure), and then, at lower units of analysis, cases that are different again (e.g. prosperous communities in poor regions, and poor communities in rich regions)

Integrating Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches



- Sequential Qual/Quan
 - Parallel tracks
 - Independent efforts
 - Increase data variance
 - Most common in
 - Large, lengthy projects
 - Or, studies requiring quick turn-around (e.g. Indonesia crisis)
- Iterative Qual/Quan (exchange, dialogue)
 - 1 Context (qual)
 - 2 Design survey (quan)
 - 3 Pre-test survey (qual)
 - 4 Implement survey (quan)
 - 5 Data analysis (quan and qual)
 - Missing/weak quan data
 - Generating new data
 - Building on existing data
 - ‘Thinking quan, acting qual’
 - Identifying valid instruments



6. Academic examples

- Economic Sociology
 - **Douglas Massey on networks and immigration**
 - Alejandro Portes on the rise of ethnic enclaves
 - Viviana Zelizer on “pricing the priceless child”
 - Mark Granovetter on the social underpinnings of markets and exchange
 - **William Wilson on the inner-city underclass**
- Comparative Politics
 - Ashutosh Varshney on communal violence in India
 - Valerie Bunce on states and civil society in ECA
 - **Robert Putnam on civic engagement in Italy/US**
 - James Mahoney on democracy in Central Am
 - Merilee Grindle on public services in Africa and LatAm

7. Operational examples



- 1 Guatemala Poverty Assessment
 - Application of WDR2000
 - ‘Sequential’: large, lengthy study
 - Quan: expanded LSMS
 - first social capital module
 - large differences by region, gender, income, ethnicity
 - pervasive elite capture
 - Qual: 10 villages (5 different ethnic groups)
 - perceptions of exclusion, access to services
 - fear of reprisal, of children being stolen
 - legacy of shocks (political and natural)
 - links to LSMS data

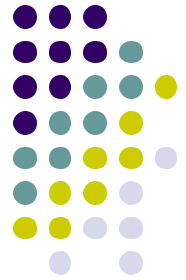
Operational examples



2 Poverty in Delhi slums

- 'Iterative'
- Qual: 4 migrant communities
 - near, far, recent, long-term
- Quan: 800 randomly selected representative households
- From survival to mobility
 - role of norms (sharing, status) and networks (kinship, politics)
 - housing, employment transitions
 - property rights
- Understanding 'governance'
 - managing collective action
 - crucial role of service provision

Operational examples

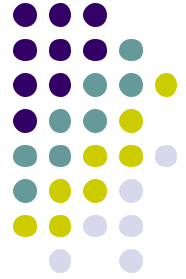


- 3 Understanding poverty in St. Lucia
 - 'Iterative'
 - Country context...
 - very small; old but usable census data
 - goal: 12 poor communities for PPA
 - Quan: use of census, map
 - 459 potential 'communities'
 - use census to identify 200 poorest...
 - ...and high/low access to water...
 - ...and close to/far from main road
 - Qual: use local staff (20 people)
 - 3-hour "selection meeting"
 - 4 groups of 5 staff; select 4 communities...
 - by employment variation, geographical proximity, exposure to hurricane

8. Concluding thoughts

- The virtues and limits of measurement
 - Tension between simplifying versus complicating reality
- Triangulation
 - Integrating more data, better data, more diverse data as “substitutes” and “complements”
- Surveys as tool for adaptation and guidance
 - Not prescription for uniformity or control
 - One size does not fit all
 - Encouraging comparability across time and space
 - Complementary role of qual *data* with quan *methods* (and vice versa)





Mixed methods can be...

1. Difficult...

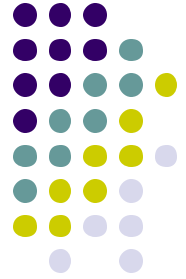
- Technically
 - trained exclusively within disciplines
- Administratively
 - finding, coordinating willing and able staff
 - different agendas, expectations
- Professionally
 - No “natural constituency” to provide
 - financial, moral support
 - detailed intellectual critique

2. ...Time consuming...

3. ...But enormously rewarding!

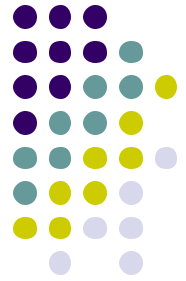
- More, better data ➡ better theory, better policy
- Bridging otherwise separate disciplines, sectors
- Development as “bio-technology” (multiple agents and agencies of expertise) not “math” (lone genius) problem

Reading suggestions



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Reading suggestions



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