

Editorial: Note From the Guest Editor

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Working on this special edition has been a rewarding experience. My colleague, Tony Onwuegbuzie (who has worked with me closely on this special issue), and I put together our “dream table of contents” last year, and I am proud to report that our final table of contents is virtually identical to the original table of contents. We have been privileged to work with an outstanding team of authors who are leaders in mixed research. The authors have painstakingly covered an important set of topics that provides a substantial sample of the latest thinking about mixed research.

The three major approaches to research can be broadly conceptualized by drawing a continuum and placing the term qualitative research on the left pole, the term quantitative research on the right pole, and placing the term mixed research in the middle. Although Tony Onwuegbuzie and I recommend that mixed research be based on a broad and inclusive definition (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Onwuegbuzie & Johnson, 2006 in this issue) with much of the area in the continuum falling into the domain of mixed research, many other authors have cogently argued for more specific definitions. I believe there is merit to both of these definitional approaches. Regardless of where methodologists place mixed research on the research continuum, it is important to recognize that the purpose of mixed research is *not* to replace qualitative research or quantitative research. There will be many times and places where qualitative research will be preferred over mixed and quantitative research, and there will be many times and places where quantitative research will be preferred over qualitative and mixed research. Qualitative research, quantitative research, and mixed research *all* have much to offer the research community. This special issue is focused on the “middle” approach (i.e., mixed research).

In the first of the nine articles in this special issue, John Creswell (co-founder and Co-Executive Editor, with Abbas Tashakkori, of the *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*) and his colleagues (Ron Shope, Vicki L. Plano Clark, and Denise O. Green) convincingly explain why mixed research often is viewed positively by qualitative researchers. They hope to increase the dialogue with qualitative researchers about the legitimacy and usefulness of mixed research. This is a dialogue that I trust will continue to grow

because, in my view, the local and experienced worlds described so vividly and passionately by qualitative researchers are equally important to social science as is the world of probabilistic generalizations (and related attempts to produce broadly applicable solutions to social problems) that is described by quantitative researchers.

In Article 2, Charles Teddlie and Abbas Tashakkori (co-editors of the landmark *Handbook of Mixed Methods in Social and Behavioral Research*) provide the most inclusive and, perhaps, the best typology of mixed research offered to date. Although it is very helpful to have more specialized and competing typologies, all of us will benefit if we become familiar with the new Teddlie/Tashakkori typology of mixed research designs. In Article 3, Margarete Sandelowski (an eminent and internationally recognized qualitative research methodologist) and her colleagues (Corrine I. Voils, and Julie Barroso) have offered an insightful and cutting-edge explanation of how to conduct mixed research syntheses. This should prove useful for dissertation students constructing their literature reviews, practicing researchers as they try to understand and integrate the past literature, and researchers who want to contribute mixed research synthesis studies to the literature (along the lines of meta-synthesis in qualitative research and meta-analysis in quantitative research). In Article 4, Robert K. Yin (whose book *Case Study Research* earned the praise of the late Donald T. Campbell) provides an important article in which he calls for integrated research questions (i.e., addressing each research question with multiple rather than single methods), and he explains his useful mixed research concepts of integrated units of analysis, integration through sample nesting, using analogous items across instruments, and analytic integration. In Article 5, Tony Onwuegbuzie and I discuss nine types of legitimation for mixed research; *legitimation* is the term we suggest be used in mixed research to refer to research quality (in qualitative research the generally agreed upon term is “trustworthiness” and in quantitative research the term is “validity”).

Articles 6 and 7 provide new guidelines for practice. In Article 6, Pat Bazeley (an internationally renowned scholar of qualitative data analysis and Associate Editor of the *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*) provides an accessible and highly useful

discussion of integrating qualitative and quantitative data through analysis. By reading this article, readers will gain specific strategies for mixed data analysis and they will increase in mixed data analysis self-efficacy because of the clarity of this article. In Article 7, Huey T. Chen (originator, along with Peter Rossi, of *Theory-Driven Evaluation*) shows how mixed research is used in conjunction with Theory-Driven Evaluation through, for example, the generation and testing of program theory (which is composed of an action model and a change model). Chen also introduces several mixed research strategies for our consideration.

In Article 8, Valerie Caracelli (one of the top evaluators with the U.S. federal government and longtime writer on mixed research) discusses the current federal push for randomized clinical/controlled trials for the purpose of accountability, and she explains how this approach can be fruitfully complemented by ethnographic research strategies. She provides many examples of federal evaluations that, in the past, have used ethnographic approaches separately and in conjunction with other methodologies.

In Article 9, Jennifer Greene (coeditor, with Valerie Caracelli, of the outstanding 1997 book *Advances in Mixed-Method Evaluation: The Challenges and Benefits of Integrating Diverse Paradigms*) not only reviews the other eight articles, she also introduces four domains that constitute social science research methodology. The four domains include philosophical assumptions and stances (i.e., what qualitative research methodologists Denzin and Lincoln appear to mean by the term “paradigm”; a synonym may be *philosophical paradigm* or *epistemological paradigm*), inquiry logic (i.e., what traditionally is called “methodology” and is that which “structures the inquirer’s gaze”), guidelines for practice (i.e., specific tools and procedures, the “how to” part of methodology), and sociopolitical commitments (i.e., commitments arising in relation to the specific location in society in which inquiry is situated). This article is especially helpful in showing that methodology can be viewed as a multifaceted concept. We liked Greene’s four domains so much that we decided to use them to classify the rest of the articles, as can be seen in the table of contents.

When we were working on our “dream table of contents,” Tony Onwuegbuzie and I discussed including articles on the philosophy supporting mixed research, but we decided that articles on philosophical/methodological pragmatism already were available. Therefore, if one were to use this special issue as an introduction to recent thinking about mixed research (e.g., in a course on mixed research or as a supplement to a traditional qualitative or quantitative research course), I would recommend adding readings on underlying philosophy. Two papers, focusing on the

most commonly stated philosophy supporting mixed research (i.e., pragmatism), are provided by Howe (1988) and by Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004). A competing paper that focuses on a relatively new and inclusive form of realism that was developed for social research is provided by Maxwell (2004).

Before finishing, I want to thank Tony Onwuegbuzie for working closely with me from the beginning to the end on visualizing and developing this special issue. I want to thank Drs. Claribel Torres, Gail Hughes, and Larry Daniel for copyediting and producing this special issue. Finally, I want to thank the editors of *Research in the Schools*, Drs. Larry Daniel and Tony Onwuegbuzie, for devoting a special issue to the important topic of mixed research and for inviting me to be the guest editor.

Most of all, our thanks go to the authors of this special issue. It is their articles that will move the field forward by their conceptualizations of mixed research, their explications of the logic of mixed research, and by their explanations of many practical strategies and techniques that will be of use to all researchers. Thanks to these authors, we have a collection of nine excellent articles on mixed methods research. Enjoy!

References

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