

Books on Mixed Methods Research: A Window on the Growth in Number and Diversity

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In the editorial published in the October 2021 issue of the *Journal of Mixed Methods Research* (Fetters & Molina-Azorin, 2021), we noted several indicators of how the mixed methods field is growing and maturing. This previous editorial focused especially on guidance for using mixed methods from diverse international organizations. In the present editorial we focus on another indicator of the maturity of the field: the books published about mixed methods and books that include substantive content on this methodological approach. While most journal articles focus on research, books play a key role in academia by informing and guiding research as well as facilitating diffusion of knowledge and training about foundational concepts to design, implement, interpret, and disseminate mixed methods studies. Books help promote capacity building for researchers at all stages in their careers from junior to senior scholars.

Regarding the number of books specifically about mixed methods research, a previous assessment can be traced to Onwuegbuzie (2012). He identified 31 books written about mixed methods that had been published through 2012. He identified two handbooks (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003, 2010) and 29 authored or edited books, e.g., Andrew and Halcomb (2009), Creswell and Plano Clark (2011), Greene, (2007), Mertens (2004), Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998), Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009). Moreover, some books included mixed methods as a part of the book along with quantitative and qualitative approaches (Creswell, 2008; Johnson & Christensen, 2010).

In this editorial, we emphasize the growth in number of books published that examine mixed methods research and portray the diversity of these books relative to the types of books by the authors' roles, the academic and research emphases, the multidisciplinary versus disciplinary-specific focus, the characterization of mixed methods as one of multiple methodologies or as a combined methodology, and the focus on a specific aspect of mixed methods research.

Our intent is not to identify exhaustively all the books published that have a focus, or a substantive part of the content focused on mixed methods research. Providing a comprehensive list of all the books featuring mixed methods, especially given the very large number of books that may include content about mixed methods, represents a formidable task that extends beyond the

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scope of this editorial. We have refrained from estimating an exact number of books published about mixed methods and creating a comprehensive list of books that have been published at this moment in time.

We structured this editorial using a historical perspective. The beginnings of the contemporary movement of mixed methods research as a distinct methodological approach can be dated to the late 1980s (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Greene, 2015) with several sentinel works published these first years (Bryman, 1988; Greene et al., 1989). During this time mixed methods research emerged as a method with a recognized name and distinct identity (Denscombe, 2008). Although earlier studies had used mixed methods (Hesse-Biber, 2010a; Maxwell, 2016), we can consider the past three decades as the contemporary movement of formalization of mixed methods research with a dramatic transformation (Hesse-Biber, 2015). Using this time point as reference, we have examined three main periods to consider the dissemination of knowledge on mixed methods through books published: a) in the years until 2000; b) the period 2001–2010; and c) the period from 2011–2021.

Growth in Books in the Modern Era of Mixed Methods Research

Books Published Until 2000

Prior to the turn of the 21st century several pioneering books can be considered as the opening salvo of the contemporary movement of mixed methods. Although the term ‘mixed methods’ is not used in the title of some the earliest books, important ideas about combining and integrating quantitative and qualitative methods are clearly noted.

In the 1980s, Fielding and Fielding (1986) examined possibilities for linking qualitative and quantitative data. After several chapters about the nature of quantitative and qualitative research, Bryman (1988) explored issues related to the combination of quantitative and qualitative research. Bryman extended these ideas in later books, e.g., Bell, Bryman and Harley (2018). Brewer and Hunter (1989) discussed multimethod research in the late 1980s and published an update 17 years later (Brewer & Hunter, 2006).

In the 1990s, several edited books were published on mixed methods, e.g., Brannen (1992), Reichardt & Rallis (1994), and Greene & Caracelli (1997). The last two books focused on evaluation. Regarding authored books, Newman and Benz (1998) published the book entitled *Qualitative-quantitative research methodology*. Ten years later Ridenour and Newman (2008) expanded upon these ideas and changed the title of the book to include the term “mixed methods research”. Another noteworthy book of this era was by Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998) who used the term “mixed methodology” in the title of their book. In the last year of this period, Bamberger (2000) edited a book about integrating quantitative and qualitative research in development projects.

Books Published from 2001 to 2010

The decade from 2001 to 2010 heralded important growth in the publication of books on mixed methods research. Importantly, the term ‘mixed methods’ became institutionalized, and many authors used this term in the titles of their books.

The publication in 2003 of the first handbook focused on the mixed methods methodological approach (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003) marked a key event for the field of mixed methods research. The authors published a second edition of this handbook as well during this period (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). Other important edited books including chapters by several authors were also published in this period. These included books not only from a general perspective (Bergman, 2008), but also a specific discipline perspective, for example in nursing and the health sciences (Andrew & Halcomb, 2009).

Several authors published landmark textbooks focused on mixed methods in this decade, e.g., Creswell and Plano Clark (2007), Greene (2007), Morse and Niehaus (2009), Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009), and Hesse-Biber (2010b) all published ground-breaking textbooks. During this time, other published textbooks featured mixed methods together with quantitative and qualitative methods (e.g., Creswell, 2003; Johnson & Christensen, 2010; Mertens, 2004). Notably, several books included substantive content on mixed methods but were not exclusively focused on mixed methods.

Some authors who had not included the term ‘mixed methods’ in the title of the first editions of their books subsequently added the term ‘mixed methods’ in subsequent editions. For example, Creswell (1994) did not include this term in his first edition of *Research design*, but the second edition published in 2003 (Creswell, 2003) and following editions Creswell included the term together with qualitative and quantitative approaches. Additionally, in the book *Educational research*, Johnson and Christensen began including the term mixed methods in the title of the second edition (Johnson & Christensen, 2004) and continued its inclusion in following editions.

There were additional books that did not include the term mixed methods in the title, even though the authors examined substantively the methodological approach in the content of the book. For example, in *Educational research* in the first edition (Creswell, 2002) and in the following editions, Creswell did not include the term mixed methods even though the ensuing editions contained content on mixed methods. In this regard many methodological textbooks with a field-specific focus also represented mixed methods alongside other methodological approaches, but the authors did not include the term mixed methods in the book title. This trend has continued into the following decade as well, e.g., Saunders et al. (2016).

The publication of collections of exemplary studies heralded another development between 2001–2010. For example, in *The mixed methods reader*, Plano Clark and Creswell (2008) presented a collection of methodological discussions of previous publications together with exemplars of mixed methods studies. Bryman (2006) also organized together key articles from the mixed methods literature.

Books Published Since 2011

In the decade since 2010, we note two developments regarding the publication of content on mixed methods research in books: exponential growth in the number of publications and expanding diversity in the types of publications.

Regarding the growth of publications, an electronic search was conducted by an information scientist (see acknowledgment to Kathryn Vanderboll) to estimate the number of books published on mixed methods research. The key terms “mixed methods” and “mixed-methods” were used to identify books that included these terms in the title of the book and in any period. The search identified more than 300 titles. Additionally, more than 80% of these books were published since 2010. As well as original English publications, the search identified multiple translations of popular books, as well as original publications about mixed methods in other languages as well.

Presumably, this figure represents a conservative estimate considering the keywords utilized. Many books addressing mixed methods research would not have been identified in this electronic search as some authors did not use these terms in the title (Gobo, et al., 2022; Morgan, 2014). Moreover, this figure of the number of books identified through the electronic search does not include books that contain chapters or sections about mixed methods as the term mixed methods was not in the title.

Regarding the diversity in types of publications, milestones include a new handbook published in 2015 (Hesse-Biber & Johnson, 2015). To our knowledge, other handbooks are projected for publication soon, e.g., a handbook edited by Cheryl Poth about mixed methods designs, and a

handbook edited by Roslyn Cameron about mixed methods in business and management. Many new textbooks have been published in the last decade, including second and subsequent editions of key textbooks published in the previous decade (e.g., [Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011, 2018](#); [Tashakkori et al, 2021](#)). Another milestone regarding publication of books in this last decade was the decision by Sage starting in 2015 to publish a book series focused on mixed methods that Plano Clark and Ivankova edit. To date, they have eight titles with others forthcoming.

Diversity in the Focus of Books on Mixed Methods Research

To illustrate the diversity of publications with content on mixed methods through books, we shift our focus to the different types of published books. Rather than maintain time periods, we include for this description publications from all the periods examined in this editorial. We believe this classification of books provides a means for demonstrating the great diversity in books published about mixed methods research.

Authored and Edited Types of Books

First, the books have varied by the authors's roles. This category includes original author books, e.g., [Fetters \(2020\)](#), [Greene \(2007\)](#), [Mertens \(2004\)](#), [Tashakkori and Teddlie \(1998\)](#), edited books with chapters, e.g., [Andrew & Halcomb \(2009\)](#) and [Bergman \(2008\)](#), and handbooks as books of reference for the field of mixed methods research that contain chapters by multiple authors, e.g., [Hesse-Biber & Johnson \(2015\)](#) and [Tashakkori & Teddlie \(2003, 2010\)](#).

Books with Academic/Research Emphases

Second, some books have academic/research emphases ([Bamberger, 2000](#); [Greene & Caracelli, 1997](#)), while other books are textbooks mainly aimed at students ([Creamer, 2018](#); [Creswell, 2015](#); [Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018](#); [Fetters, 2020](#); [Tashakkori et al., 2021](#)).

Multidisciplinary and Disciplinary-Specific Books

Third, some books are multidisciplinary in focus while others are disciplinary specific. For example, multidisciplinary or general books have been authored to be useful in several fields (e.g., [Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018](#); [Fetters, 2020](#); [Hesse-Biber & Johnson, 2015](#); [Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010](#); [Watkins & Gioia, 2015](#)). In other books, the authors wrote for audiences in specific fields ([Andrew & Halcomb, 2009](#); [Bazeley, 2019](#); [Curry & Nunez-Smith, 2015](#); [Mertens, 2018, 2020](#); [Niglas, 2004](#)) or even on specific topics within a field ([Factor & Ulhoi, 2021](#)).

Books Featuring Mixed Methods Research as One of Multiple Methodologies or as a Combined Methodology with Other Approaches

Fourth, in some books, the entire content is focused on mixed methods, e.g., [Greene \(2007\)](#), [Hesse-Biber & Johnson \(2015\)](#), [Plano Clark & Ivankova \(2016\)](#), [Poth \(2018\)](#), [Tashakkori & Teddlie \(2003; 2010\)](#). However, in other books, mixed methods research shares the content with other methodological approaches.

In this latter grouping, we identified three variations. First, many books, mainly textbooks, present and examine content about quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods approaches, and indicate this emphasis even in the title of the book ([Creswell & Creswell, 2017](#); [Mertens, 2020](#)). Second, other books intersected or scaffolded mixed methods with other

methodological approaches, for example, [Ivankova \(2015\)](#) wrote about mixed methods and action research, [Pelto \(2017\)](#) wrote about mixed methods and ethnographic research, and [Creamer \(2021\)](#) wrote about mixed methods and grounded theory. Third, many handbooks and edited books not focused on mixed methods include chapters on mixed methods research ([Creswell, 2011](#); [Molina-Azorin, 2018](#)).

Books Focused on Specific Aspects of Mixed Methods Research

A fifth category of books are those that have focused on specific aspects in the mixed methods research process or a dimension of mixed methods, for example, mixed methods data collection ([Axinn & Pearce, 2006](#)), data analysis ([Bazeley, 2018](#); [Onwuegbuzie & Johnson, 2021](#)), and use of a “transformative” world view ([Mertens, 2009](#)). Another variant reflects chapters on specific aspects of mixed methods published in books not focused exclusively on mixed methods. For example, [Guetterman et al. \(2015\)](#) and [Plano Clark and Sanders \(2015\)](#) published chapters on visual displays in mixed methods in a book about visual displays in general.

Limitations

Short of a systematic review, identifying all the books published about mixed methods research or that featured mixed methods as part of the content, making a precise estimate of the actual number of books would be difficult. That said, this review provides a general or “thousand-foot view” demarcating the initial growth of mixed methods books in the pre-2000 era of the discipline, the subsequent expansion phase through 2010, and the exponential growth phase between 2011 and 2021. Based on the estimate of 31 by [Onwuegbuzie \(2012\)](#) at the beginning of this period, an estimated ten-fold increase definitively demarcates rapid growth and interest. Another limitation, this review does not include other pre-modern mixed methods era books of previous decades of scholarship ([Maxwell, 2016](#)), an assessment well beyond the current scope.

We note several limitations of this categorization of diversity in mixed methods research books. First, the categories are not exclusive. A specific book on mixed methods research could be included in several of these classifications. For example, [Creswell and Plano Clark \(2018\)](#) represents an authored textbook examining the entire research process that is focused on mixed methods, that is written for a multidisciplinary audience, and is not focused on a specific aspect of mixed methods. Second, the classification scheme reflects our own interpretation of the books intended foci and audiences. The authors of the identified and classified books may contend with our categorization of their works. Third, as a truncated review, we may well have missed inclusion of some books or variations that have focused on mixed methods research that would merit inclusion or would extend the examples provided. To these authors we extend our regrets and emphasize this omission not as a slight, but as a space and focus limitation. Fourth, this assessment does not include the language of publication of the books. To our knowledge, researchers have translated several popular books into other languages such as Japanese and Chinese. Additionally, original books about mixed methods published in languages besides English have been emerging ([Kakai, 2015](#); [Fetters & Kakai, 2021](#)).

Conclusions

The number and diversity of books and their content that examine the mixed methods methodological approach provides a robust indication of the growing importance of mixed methods and the maturity of the field. Authors from many different countries and disciplines, and many

publishers are considering mixed methods as an important methodological approach to be considered in research and training.

We are aware of many forthcoming books as current and new authors prepare new handbooks, textbooks, and other types of books for publication. As mixed methods research grows in popularity around the world, we anticipate even more translations of books into other languages, and we particularly await eagerly more original publications in other languages from around the globe. With the advent and increasing diffusion of ebooks, unforeseen possibilities for authoring and dissemination about the methodology continue to emerge. We anticipate these efforts, advances, and changes will help to expand dissemination of the methodology into all corners of the world and to consolidate mixed methods as a methodology robust and effective for addressing the complex and urgent social problems that social science researchers need to solve.

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