

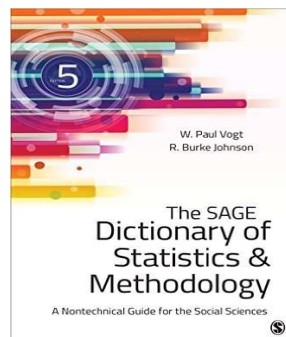
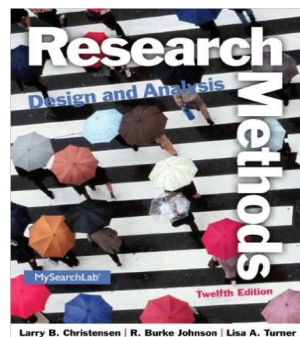
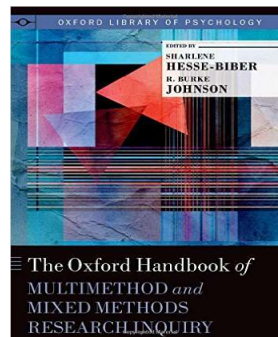
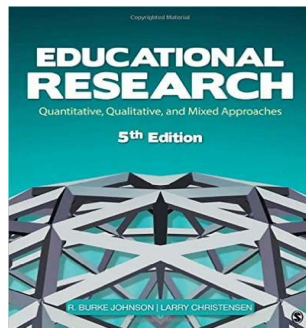
## Dialectical Pluralism for Equal-Status or “Interactive” Mixed Methods Research

R. Burke Johnson

[bjohnson@southalabama.edu](mailto:bjohnson@southalabama.edu)

Based on the following article:

Johnson, R. B. (JMMR website, OnlineFirst, waiting for volume and issue). Dialectical pluralism: A metaparadigm whose time has come. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, 1-18, doi:10.1177/1558689815607692



Today, I will share some of my vision for MMR and

- (A) Describe a value-engaged process philosophy to drive strong mixed methods research; I have named the philosophy ***dialectical pluralism*** (or DP)
- (B) Discuss difference between “weak” and “strong” versions of MMR and make MMR a little more “complex”
- (C) Advocate increased usage of the strong version of MMR

### Quick point about latest thinking about MMR

Greene (2015) contends, and I agree, that mixed methods research encourages interactive combination or mixing at 3 levels (or *more*):

1. **Method** (or what I call *method of data collection*)
2. **Methodology** (or what I call *research method* in quantitative research and *theoretical framework* in qualitative research)
3. **Paradigm.**

DP can help with these kinds of mixing (and more)...

## Dialectical Pluralism: A Philosophy for MMR

*Dialectical pluralism* (DP) is a process philosophy for MMR.

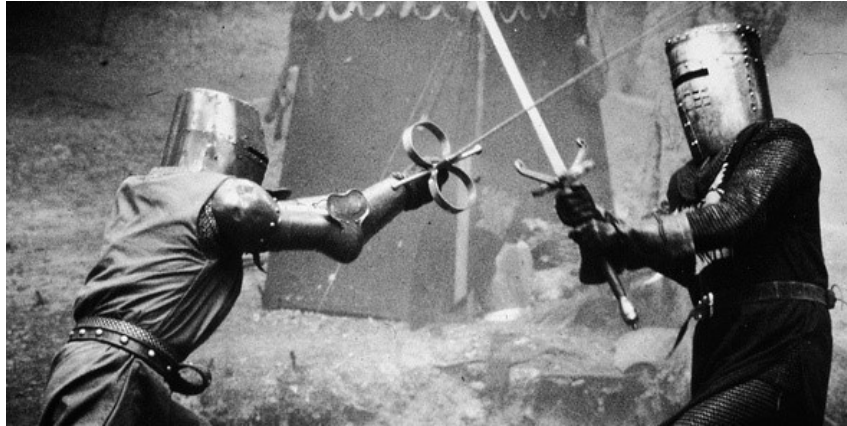
DP is important because there are many important philosophical and methodological paradigms and worldviews *that deserve a great deal of respect*.

- DP emphasizes that we must dialectically examine and value multiple data and perspectives.

Different perspectives; add Protagoras (relativist) for tripartite ancient trilogy



It is important to consider multiple & conflicting or divergent perspectives



Each perspective provides a vision of the Good



## What is Dialectical Pluralism?

- DP ends the “paradigm wars” by producing a working *metaparadigm* in each research study.
- It’s a communication theory that requires the respectful listening to two or more “paradigms”
- Key idea: understand and purposively, dialectically, and dialogically engage with difference including different paradigms, disciplines, values, and stakeholders and citizen perspectives
- This should produce socially and scientifically justified knowledge that is “thick” (value laden), provisionally true, useful, and more widely accepted

## Heloise Quote

"I preferred the weapons of dialectic to all the other teachings of philosophy, and and armed with these I chose the conflicts of disputation instead of the trophies of war."

Letter I, p. 3

--Héloïse d'Argenteuil (1101-1164, companion of Peter Abelard: author of *Sic et Non* “Yes and No”)



## Dialectical Pluralism

DP as a metaparadigm and process theory for research. Users will

- “Dialectically listen” to divergent perspectives
- Explicitly state and “pack” the approach with stakeholders’ and researchers’ epistemological and social/political values to guide the research (including valued-means and valued-ends), and
- Combine important ideas from competing paradigms and multiple values into a new **socially agreed upon** whole for each research study

## Dialectical Pluralism

Requires:

- Listening,
- Dialoging with difference,
- Embracing tensions,
- Understanding “the Other,”
- Learning, valuing,
- and acting.

## Dialectical Pluralism & Justice

- At its core, DP emphasizes procedural or **process justice** through a deliberative democratic process.
  - Must make sure team/group composition includes all key stakeholders and standpoint representatives
  - Need a facilitator = I recommend you, the MMR member learn how to do this!

## Process Justice Procedures

MMR leader should facilitate group process:

- Work toward shared participation (for legitimation) and understanding of team/group goals
- Note that a transparent and fair process legitimates outcomes
- Everyone must express their views and reasons
- Make sure alternatives are examined

## Process Justice Procedures

MMR leader should facilitate and

- Obtain agreement on process
- Encourage and reinforce open-mindedness of members
- Make sure all members actively listen and participate, including practicing constructive conflict (emphasizing cognitive not emotional parts of issues)
- Help group articulate clear rationales for decisions
- Reframe during impasses and bring outside experts if needed

## Dialectical Pluralism & Justice

In addition to **process justice**, DP can and often should be used to address multiple justices:

- Social justice (reduce inequalities and better allocate power)
- Distributive justice (better allocate resources)
- Retributive or, restorative and compensatory justice (for past violations of rights of humans)
- Global justice (for our single world)



## Dialectical Pluralism & Justice

Oftentimes, I recommend combining DP with Donna Mertens' transformative paradigm for MMR

Regardless, from a values-outcome perspective, for DP to work, you must pack the team or larger group with representatives of desired values & respect the outcome (science operates on rational disputation and social agreement)

– Caveat: must make sure the group process does not fail (List provided on next slide).

## Avoid Group Process Failures

Be careful to avoid failures such as

- Groupthink
- Social loafing and social inhibition
- Unequal power
- Confirmation bias
- Premature closure
- Sunk-cost bias
- Various Excesses and deficiencies (Aristotle)



## Dialectical Pluralism

The immediate outcome of DP can take multiple forms:

- (a) continued confusion,
- (b) informed conflict,
- (c) tense compromise,
- (d) general agreement that maintains key aspects from different positions or
- (e) happy balance of differences.

## Dialectical Pluralism

Stated differently, the **goal** is to work towards the last outcome listed below:

- Win-lose solution (based on competition , zero-sum assumption)
- Tolerance
- Compromise
- Collaborative solution
- Win-win solution (based on interactive cooperation)

## DP

One can engage DP as both

- an **intellectual process** (where one internally dialogues with ideas, values, concepts, and differences)

and

- a **group process** (where one, working in a carefully formed heterogeneous group, strives to produce what Morton Deutsch calls win-win results).

## DP as an Intellectual Process

As an **intellectual process**, DP

- Requires deep attention to multiple disciplines and multiple sides of issues (*internal dialectical thought*)
- Strives for continual “dialectical integration”
- Tries to interrelate intellectual and conceptual differences and tradeoffs such as multiple sources of evidence, multiple values, and multiple epistemological issues & standpoints.

## F. Scott Fitzgerald Quote

“The test of a first-rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposite ideas in mind at the same time and still retain the ability to function”

--F. Scott Fitzgerald (1936)



## DP as a Group Process

DP can also be viewed as a **group process**.

- Group process is important because MMR is often conducted in research teams and larger groups (e.g., communities of practice & interconnected networks of people)
- Group process strategies come from multiple literatures, such as peace-and-conflict studies, conflict management, negotiation, innovation, group counseling, small group research, group dynamics, and more

### Here are some group process (GP) strategies (see article for more)

- Continually develop trust and empathy
- Engage in constructive conflict
- Practice reciprocity
- Cooperate rather than compete
- Tolerate all viewpoints
- Practice constructive criticism
- Develop multifaceted and holistic truths

### More GP strategies

- Practice equal power in the group
- Try to understand interests and reasons behind divergent perspectives
- Continually practice self-reflection
- Focus on learning rather than influencing
- View difference and conflict as normal and good—they drive change
- Identify and invoke common interests, goals, and desired outcomes

## Yet more GP strategies

- Identify truth-value and insights in different perspectives
- Thoughtful-empathetic discussion is progress
- Peace comes with balanced or equal power
- Realize that many differences are complementary (producing a differential consensus)
- Wholes can incorporate similarity and difference, divergence and convergence

## Even more GP strategies

- Every ending is a new starting point
- Keep coming back to agreed upon goals
- Continually use differences to drive creativity and innovation, and social agreement to produce socially valued change
- Group development/change is not linear (punctuated equilibrium)
- Focus on creating the heterogeneous group's desired future(s)

### \*\*\*Key Idea\*\*\*

- \*The MMR member of the team should act as the group process facilitator and ombudsman\*
- Focus on group process, not content
- Equitable and fair process makes teams successful in the long run and produces a sense of procedural justice
- DP combined with social psychological research principles provides a process for individual and group success

### More Skills: MMR Team Development

Dyer, Dyer, and Dyer (2007): give attention to the “four Cs of team development:

1. Context factors (the group environment must value collaboration, reward teamwork, allow failures in route to successes)
2. Composition factors (group is not too large, include people with different knowledge/skills, motivation to conflict constructively)

## Dyer, Dyer, and Dyer (2007) cont.

3. Competencies (e.g., goal setting, building trust and commitment to clear goals, using indicators of success, identifying clear means to achieve goals, keeping members focused on goal contribution)
4. Change factors (engage in good change management, understand group strengths and weaknesses, identify “bottlenecks” and work through them, continually adapt to new conditions, focus on continual improvement)

## MMR Conflict Management

Roger Fisher and William Ury (*Getting to Yes*, 2011; Harvard Negotiation Project) provide a 4-part process:

1. Separate people from the problem
2. Focus on the interests behind positions, not specific positions (and start with small gains/wins)
3. Generate options for mutual gain
4. Base choices/decisions on objective or socially agreed-upon criteria.



## MMR Teams and Flow Theory

A summary quote because of my lack of time:

“Group flow happens when many tensions are in perfect balance: the tension between convention and novelty; between structure and improvisation; between the critical, analytic mind and the freewheeling outside-the-box mind; between listening to the rest of the group and speaking out in individual voices. The paradox of improvisation is that it can happen only when there are rules and the players share tacit understandings, but with too many rules or too much cohesion, the potential for innovation is lost. The key question facing groups that have to innovate is finding just the right amount of structure to support improvisation, but not so much structure that it smothers creativity. Jazz and improv theater have important messages for all groups because they’re unique in how successfully they balance all of these tensions. These types of ensemble art forms embrace the tensions that drive group genius.” From *Group Genius* by Keith Sawyer, p.56

## DP Group Process

The strategies I have provided are important for strong versions of MMR.

## “But we cannot or will not agree” ...

If someone tells you that you cannot mix (e.g., Guba, 1990, says paradigms cannot be mixed) or if you reach an impasse, then use these strategies:

- Superordinate goals
- Fractionation
- Dialectical logic
- Both-And logic
- Reframing (how you talk about the process and results)
- Pragmatism (“Sorry but “I just mixed”; hence it can’t be true that one cannot mix.

## DP works on philosophical and methodological issues

Skeptics might ask, how does DP view and interact with

- Ontology,
- Epistemology,
- Axiology, and
- Methodology?

## Ontological Commitments of DP

- Ontologically speaking:
  - DP relies on ontological pluralism
  - But, at the same time, it requires “dialectical listening” to multiple ontologies
  - DP recognizes subjective, intersubjective, and objective reality
  - DP also recognizes disciplinary (psychology, sociology, political science etc.) and paradigmatic realities.

## The Key Point about Ontology

The guiding ontological principle is this:

The presence of multiple ontologies and the tensions they produce are treated as strengths in DP, strengths that should be embraced not a weakness that shuts down conversation and growth.

## DP and Ontology

DP takes the position of pluralism, but listens to multiple ontologies, such as

- Idealism
- Ontological relativism
- Ontological realism
- Process metaphysics
- Dualism (e.g., mind-body).

## DP and Ontology

Note: Multiple ontologies can provide important insights and point to something that is relevant and real.

## DP and Epistemology

- DP uses a dialectical/dialogical/hermeneutical epistemology.
- DP produces new wholes (that are concurrently homogeneous and heterogeneous),
- DP values multiple standpoints, and especially solutions that work in theory and practice
- DP produces lower case “t” truths that are provisional and multiple
- DP emphasizes “epistemological listening” in each research project

## Epistemology

The guiding epistemological principle is this:

DP users can and should listen to multiple epistemologies to determine what is epistemically relevant and important for each specific research project.

## A few epistemologies

- Empiricism; Rationalism; Constructivism; Scientific realism; Epistemological relativism; Pragmatism; Contextualism; Interpretivism and hermeneutics; evolutionary epistemology; and communicative rationality.

## Epistemology

Michael Patton (2002) discussed five alternative sets of criteria for judging the quality and credibility of research. They included

- traditional scientific criteria,
- social construction and constructivist criteria,
- artistic and evocative criteria,
- critical change criteria, and
- evaluation standards and principles criteria.

From the DP perspective, one is empowered and enabled to carefully and thoughtfully draw from two or more of these in a single research study.

## Axiology and Ethics

DP combines multiple ethical concepts, values, and theories

A few ethical theories: ethical relativism, ethical realism, utilitarianism, deontology, ethics of democracy, social justice, discourse ethics, and standpoint ethics

Also, there are many social values and epistemic values/virtues to dialectically consider for each research study

## Axiology

The guiding axiological principle produced by DP is as follows:

Researchers should state their explicit values, make their implicit values explicit, respectfully and emphatically discuss the relevant values, and put together an apt and agreeable “package of values” that serves multiple important groups and perspectives for each project. This principle refers to all values, epistemological as well as social.

## Axiology

It is important to realize that in quantitative research the dependent variables, or in qualitative research the outcomes of interest, express values. Dependent variables/qualitative outcomes express what researchers value in some way and is an important area for stakeholder dialogue.

## Methodology and Methods

DP dialogues with multiple methods and methodological issues, and privileges mixing of methods that are very **different**

Here are a few examples of methodologies:  
qualitative, quantitative, and MMR;  
multimethod research; feminist methods;  
scientific naturalism; methodological  
humanism; confirmation theory; inference to  
best explanation.



## Methodology and Methods

Here are a few examples of methods:

Tests,

Questionnaires

Interviews

Observations

Focus Groups

Constructed data

Existing data

Secondary data

## Methodology and Methods

The guiding DP methodological/methods principle is as follows:

Researchers and stakeholders should dialectically listen and consider multiple methodological concepts, issues, inquiry logics, and particular research methods and construct the appropriate mix for each research study.

## More ideas of applying DP to MMR

- Consider multiple inquiry purposes (Newman, Ridenour, Newman, and DeMarco, 2004); (e.g.,
- Consider different purposes for mixing methods (Greene, 2007): triangulation complementarity, development, initiation, expansion.
- Using DP you can creatively construct new , purposes with emergent properties.

## More ideas for applying DP to MMR

Key point: using DP you can creatively construct new, mixed, and multifaceted purposes with emergent properties.

- One motto of DP: “Never be restrained by a typology!” You can dialogue with them but don’t be controlled by an one of them.

For example

- generate and test a theory in a single study.
- Contribute to basic and applied science and produce social betterment and social justice
- Adopt program and adapt it to local circumstances

## DP Applied to MMR Designs

Generally speaking, when designing an MMR study, the concept is to dialectically interact with purposes, questions, possible design dimensions, and situational needs to construct the appropriate design.

- A first design strategy is to examine the multiple current design typologies (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Johnson & Christensen, 2014; Morgan, 2014; Morse & Niehaus, 2009; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009) and use these as starting points, and modify them as needed for your particular study.
  - Design diagrams explained by Creswell and Plano Clark are excellent for depicting your design.
  - We need to continually add to the current stock of designs.

## DP Applied to Designs

A second and more creative strategy is to examine and dialectically interact with the dimensions identified by Schoonenboom and Johnson (in press).

First, you can construct complex designs using the Morse notation, e.g., (QUAN + qual)→QUAL (Note that that design doesn't fit any of the current design typologies)

Second, dialogue with the multiple dimensions identified by S&J on next four slides...

## MMR Research Design: Putting it Together

See forthcoming article by Judith Schoonenboom and me, on next slide...

## Design: putting it together

### How to Construct a Mixed Methods Research Design

Judith Schoonenboom  
VU University Amsterdam

R. Burke Johnson  
University of South Alabama

In Press

*Cologne Journal for Sociology and Social Psychology*  
*Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie*

Keywords: mixed methods design, mixing purpose, timing of mixing, point of integration, design complexity

## Design: Putting it Together

*Table 1*

List of Primary and Secondary Design Dimensions

---

### **I. Primary Dimensions:**

1. Purpose.
  2. Theoretical drive.
  3. Timing (simultaneity and dependence).
  4. Point of integration.
  5. Typological vs. constructed design.
  6. Planned vs. emergent design.
  7. Complexity.
- 

## Design: Putting it Together

*Table 1 continued.*

List of Primary and Secondary Design Dimensions

---

### **II. Secondary Dimensions:**

1. Phenomenon.
  2. Social scientific theory.
  3. Ideological drive.
  4. Combination of sampling methods.
  5. Degree to which the research participants will be similar or different.
  6. Degree to which the researchers on the research team will be similar or different.
  7. Type of implementation setting.
  8. Degree to which the methods similar or different.
  9. Validity criteria and strategies.
  10. Full study vs. multiple studies.
-

## Note DP's View of Lists and Typologies

- Your job is to add to them, make them better.
- Creatively merge lists and typologies
- Interact with multiple and different lists/typologies
- Never be constrained by a single list or typology
- Avoid one-way reductionisms and a static view of knowledge

Last, please note that there are three broad types of MMR.

1. QUAL-dominant MMR
  - also called “**qualitatively-driven** MMR”
2. QUAN dominant MMR
  - also called “**quantitatively-driven** MMR”
3. Equal-status MMR
  - also called “**interactive** MMR”

Which door will you select in your next study? (If you select center door, you can interact with the other two!)



## Equal-Status or Integrative Designs

- There are **two different versions of equal-status designs** (weak and strong versions)
- DP is especially important for the strong version because it provides a way to listen to and creatively-combine/merge divergent perspectives

## Equal-Status Designs: Weak Version

### (1) The weak version of MMR

This group of MM researchers views equal-status designs as including an approximately equal mixture of QUAL and QUAN data. This is a practical perspective that wants to stop arguing about paradigms and desires to work together to try to answer important research questions.

## Equal-Status Designs: Strong Version

### (2) The strong version of MMR

According to this group, equal-status designs are concerned with mixing/combining/interacting philosophies and paradigms

This group is especially concerned with philosophy and unequal power, and wants to resolve longstanding differences in the academy about knowledge



## Approximations of Interactive MMR

Ames, G.M., Duke, M.R., Morre, R.S., & Cunradi, C.B. (2009). The impact of occupational culture on drinking behavior of young adults in the U.S. Navy. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research, 3*, 129-150.

Cherlin, A.J., Burton, L.M., Hurt, T.R., & Purvin, D.V. (2004). The influence of physical and sexual abuse on marriage and cohabitation. *American Sociological Review, 69*, 768-789.

Hang, E.E., McDougall, D.E., Pollon, D., Herbert, M., & Russell, P. (2008). Integrative mixed methods data analytic strategies in research on school success in challenging circumstances. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research, 2*, 221-247.

Parrado, E.A., McQuiston, C., & Flippen, C.A. (2005). Participatory survey research: Integrating community collaboration and quantitative methods for the study of gender and HIV risks among Hispanic migrants. *Sociological Methods & Research, 32*, 204-239.

Ungar, M., & Liebenberg, L. (2011). Assessing resilience across cultures using mixed methods: Construction of the child and youth resilience measure. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research, 5*, 126-149.

Van Ness, P.H., Fried, T.R., & Gill, T.M. (2011). Mixed methods for the interpretation of longitudinal gerontologic data: Insights from philosophical hermeneutics. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research, 5*, 293-308.

- Waldrop, D.P. (2007). Caregiver grief in terminal illness and bereavement: A mixed methods study. *Health & Social Work, 32*, 197-206.
- Wesely, P.M. (2010). Language learning motivation in early adolescents: Using mixed methods research to explore contradiction. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research, 4*, 295-312.
- Westhues, A., Ochocka, J., Jacobson, N., Smich, L., Maiter, S., Janzen, R., & Fleras, A. (2008). Developing theory from complexity: Reflections on a collaborative mixed method participatory action research study. *Qualitative Health Research, 18*, 701-717.

## Strong Version of MMR

Listens to but ultimately rejects

- Dogmatisms
- Definitions that are resistant to change or improvement over time (“eternally correct”)
- Reductionisms, monisms, and “one-way isms”
- Most universalisms
- Scientism
- Nihilism

## Strong Version of MMR

Using DP one can dialectically interact with the poles on longstanding dualisms and produce balances:

- Similarity and difference,
- Quantity and quality (Kant),
- Induction, deduction, abduction, dialectic, hermeneutics, and criticism (Aristotle, Habermas),
- Natural science and human science (Dilthey, Weber),

## Strong Version of MMR

- Objectivity and subjectivity,
- Etic and emic,
- Structure and subjective understanding,
- Reason and faith,
- Facts and values,
- Nomological and idiographic knowledge,
- Knowledge and wisdom.

### Some principles of the strong version of MMR based on DP

- Pay careful and respectful attention to multiple sides of issues, multiple perspectives, and multiple methods
- Produce negotiated, thoughtful compromises and valued wholes
- Produce dynamic balances and change

### More Principles

- Work for social betterment and social justice
- Institute checks and balances
- Use syncretism (attempt to reconcile or produce a union of different and opposing principles and practices as in philosophy or religion)
- Use synechism (anti-dualism) - doctrine of rejecting dualisms and stressing continua

## More Principles

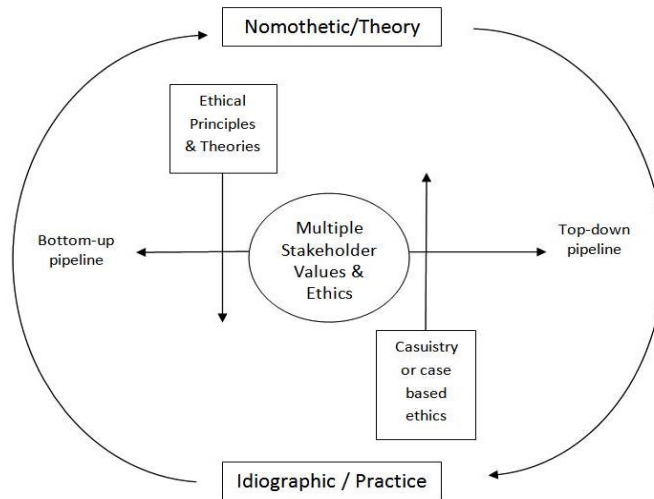
- Search for golden means (balance of extremes of excess and deficiency)
- Start saying “Yes, and” (rather than “either-or” or “not possible”)
- Continually connect theory and practice to produce “practical theory”

## Please Listen to this!

Do not fail to hear, listen to, and understand  
“The Other”

- Learn more about your weak areas. If QUAN is your strength, then try to learn more about QUAL, and vice versa
- I formally **implore** you to consider interactive designs in your future work.
- My vision for knowledge is on next slide.

## A Circle of “Scientific” Knowledge and Evidence



## Discussion/Dialogue

Please send your comments  
and thoughts to

[bjohnson@southalabama.edu](mailto:bjohnson@southalabama.edu)

Our **mission**: to find →



DP Inspired  
Interactive Designs