Writing mixed methods research articles and theses

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Key arguments

- Integration is the defining feature of mixed methods research.

- If you keep notes/reflections/conclusions etc under topic headings during analysis (regardless of source or method used), your analysis and your writing are likely to become integrated.

Questions to consider

- How is MM different from any other research writing?

- Are you writing with a methods focus or a substantive focus?

- Are you writing alone or collaboratively?

- Who is your audience?

Potential problem areas

- Advice from 'gurus' to separately question, analyse, and report before integrating.

- Integrating findings across inter- or multi-disciplinary teams.

- How much do you need to write about paradigms?

- Problem of journal orientations and especially journal word limits.

The problem of journal word limits

- How do you split up your reports?
  - Write a separate methods paper
  - Write an overview paper
  - Divide the topic, not the methods
  - Look for journals that allow longer articles
- Concessions!
  - Sometimes necessary to write separately
    (e.g., clinical trials as a [sometimes] example)
  - Some papers will 'naturally' be based more on one than the other type of data/method

Academic papers published following publication of an initial, comprehensive report

Publication	Focus/Primary question	Types of data used
Bazeley 1998	Who wins prestigious research funding?	Quantified administrative by-product data, supplemented by interviews with panel members, successful researchers and heads of departments
Grbich 1998	The effect of departmental socialization on ECR development and productivity	Qualitative (comparative) case studies
Bazeley 1999	Factors predictive of continuity as an active researcher after PhD	Survey of PhD graduates supplemented by survey of ECRs, interviews with ECRs, and responses to public advertising
Asmar 1999	Gender and discipline differences in academic ECR experience, post PhD	Survey of PhD graduates
Marsh and Bazeley 1999	Level of agreement in assessor scoring for grant applications	Administrative by-product data (assessor scores) contextualized within other project data
Bazeley 2003	Describe and justify a definition for early career status for use by academic research funding bodies	Document analysis (grants schemes), surveys of ECRs and PhD graduates, interviews (multiple sources), responses to public advertising.

Focus!

What was your purpose?

What question(s) were you asking?

What is the take home message for the reader for *this* publication?

How does it fit into the overall context of the study?

What data do you have to support *this* message?

Framing substantive writing

- Focus on the message, not the method
- Consider the audience
- Needs a clear and progressive structure
  - What does the reader already need to know to understand this point?
  - What do they need to know now to understand what's coming next?
  - (What are the conventions within your discipline?)

Structure

- Description before comparative and relational analyses
- General before particular
- Theory before application
- Paragraphing:
  - One point per paragraph
  - Topic sentence at start of each paragraph
  - Key words/emphasis at start of each sentence
- Provide linking sentences/paragraphs that create flow without forcing, e.g., picking up a point from previous section and developing it

  (try to avoid: summary … I will now talk about …).

The structure of a substantively focused mixed methods paper (Bazeley 2003)

Abstract

The 'problem' of early career researchers

Research design [and data sources]

Milestones in an academic research career

       Completion of high level research training

       Obtaining an academic appointment providing a stable research environment

       Balancing the demands of teaching with the need/desire to research

       Maintaining a research profile when promotion brings increased non-research responsibilities

       Achievement of established researcher status

Identifying research potential

       Qualification as a criterion

       Age as a criterion

       Length or stability of employment as a criterion

       The research 'track record' as a criterion

A definition for early career

Assessing early career status

Conclusion

Describing methods

- Move from general to particular

- Describe what you actually did rather than rely on labels

- Use diagrams and tables to present or summarise methods (e.g., table - in relation to questions; figure - to show sequencing)

- Be transparent, presenting 'methods as used'

Presenting results

- Integrate! (otherwise you have not mixed methods!)

- If your paper is substantively (topic) driven, then you divide and organise the content according to a breakdown of the topic: *not* methods, *not* sources, *not* paradigms.

  (even if your study components were conducted separately or sequentially)

Integrate by (for example):

- Using analysis from one method to develop the design or analysis of another

- Using different methods concurrently and/or iteratively, with data from all managed, interwoven, and analysed in a complementary way, e.g., using Excel tables, QDAS coding, Word headings to sort and bring together.

- Linking quant with qual data and using it to sort qual data for subgroups based on quant (e.g., in QDAS matrices).

- Converting codes to variables and using stats analysis to complement qual analysis.

- Exploring divergent and extreme cases; also investigating dissonance/conflict by drawing on other data.

- Developing causal models that build on statistical regularities combined with interpretive understanding of causal mechanisms

Additional strategies

- Juxtapose statistical and text data (report side by side) – "marbling…like good pastrami" (Greene, 2007)

- Convey results using different modes of representation (e.g., text, poetry/verse, stories, pictures, graphs, tables etc.)

- Present alternative accounts conveying different understandings of the same event or situation (then analyse, explain, coordinate)

Strategies (cont.)

- Integrate using a (borrowed) theoretical perspective

- Use metaphors and narratives as means of integrating ideas

- Use tables and displays

Using Word's features to help

- Using styles:
  - To hyperlink to 'drop' ideas (use the document map)
  - To create and see structure (again, using document map or outline view)
  - For efficiency (to standardise formatting)
- Create styles for each repetitive feature (of any sort)
- Learn how to format tables correctly
- Using autocorrect for repetitive words/phrases
- Use EndNote (or equivalent) for referencing.

Key message: Organise a substantive mixed methods article around issues related to the substantive topic.

- *Writing as you go* prompts questions that will enrich your analysis

  (Laurel Richardson: Writing as analysis, in D&L).

- If you *write as you analyse*, you will better integrate both your analysis and your writing.

MMIRA

Mixed Methods International Research Association

- MMIRA aims to create an international community to promote and support interdisciplinary mixed methods research

- Vision includes bringing together diverse communities of scholars, students, practitioners, policymakers, citizens, and other stakeholders, with the goals of expanding knowledge and producing social betterment and social and global justice

- Support provided through regional and international conferences, newsletters, website resources, etc. Membership includes electronic access to *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*

Further info: www.mmira.org

INTEGRATING ANALYSES IN MIXED METHODS RESEARCH

PAT BAZELEY
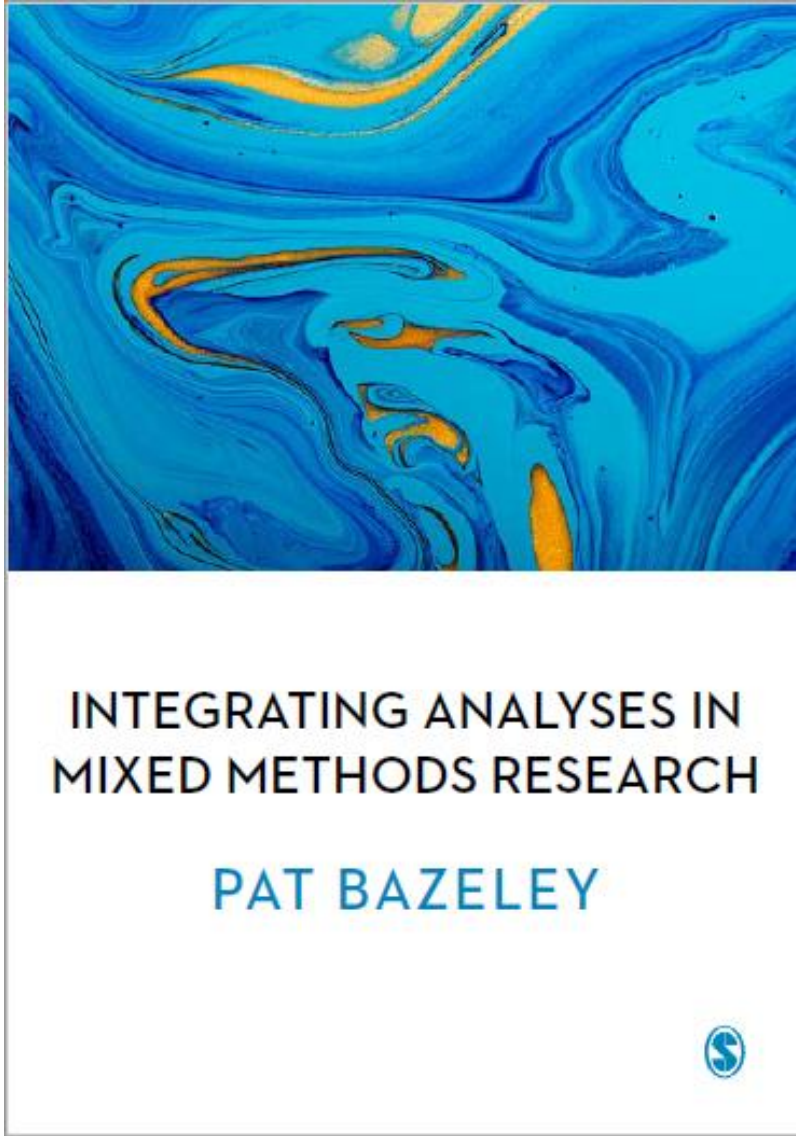
For publication in October, 2017

This book goes beyond mixed methods research design and data collection to provide a pragmatic discussion of the challenges of effectively integrating data to facilitate a more comprehensive and rigorous level of analysis. Showcasing a range of strategies for integrating different sources and forms of data as well as different approaches in analysis, it will help you plan, conduct, and disseminate complex analyses with confidence.