



European Journal for Qualitative Research in Psychotherapy

www.EJQRP.org



Views about mixed methods research from counselling and psychotherapy research students and supervisors

Alistair McBeath, Sofie Bager-Charleson and Linda Finlay

Metanoia Institute, London, UK.

Email: alistair.mcbeath@metanoia.ac.uk

Abstract: How do students and supervisors who are actively involved in the process of research view and experience mixed methods research? This study explores views held by counselling and psychotherapy research students and supervisors around mixed methods research, based on a survey reaching 125 respondents. The survey generated both quantitative data from an online survey and qualitative data from free text comments and a story completion approach. Knowledge about mixed methods research was not widespread (59%) although there was a majority view (81%) that qualitative and quantitative research methods could be meaningfully combined. There was a clear majority view (87%) that it is important for researchers in counselling and psychotherapy to have a working knowledge of mixed methods research. Out of 49 story stem replies, 46 were in support of mixed methods. A discussion explores the implications of these findings for training and supervision.

Keywords: Mixed methods research, reflexive thematic analysis, online survey, story stem completion, methodology.

The impetus for the research reported in this paper came from the first two authors' involvement in a range of research-based psychotherapy doctoral programmes at Metanoia where the vast majority of research methods chosen are exclusively qualitative (e.g., narrative analysis, interpretative phenomenological analysis, thematic analysis). It felt important to explore why the choice of qualitative methods is so dominant when there are other potentially powerful research methods such as mixed methods research (MMR) available where a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods is utilised. The authors speculated about the reasons for the dominant choice of qualitative research methods and about any influencing factors including, for instance, lack of knowledge, adherence to specific philosophical reasoning, a lack of appropriate research skills and/or perhaps it is a

reflection of the influence of research supervisors. Reflections such as these were at the heart of the research project which itself followed a mixed (quantitative/qualitative) methods research approach.

It should be stated at the outset that the first two authors (AM and SB-C) are keen proponents of mixed methods research and have used it in a variety of research settings (e.g., McBeath, Bager-Charleson & Abarbanel, 2020; McBeath, du Plock & Bager-Charleson, 2020; Bager-Charleson & McBeath, 2021a). At conference presentations and through various publications (e.g., Bager-Charleson & McBeath, 2021b; McBeath 2022), the authors have received positive reactions to their promotion of mixed methods research. However, it also seemed to be the case from informal feedback that there was a sense that knowledge about mixed methods research was patchy and limited. Supervising psychotherapy doctoral research students, all three authors have been fortunate to have seen novice researchers enthusiastically embrace mixed methods research and to witness their excitement at savouring the

depth and breadth of data collected. So, from a pre-research standpoint we were invested in finding out more about the factors that currently seem to limit the promotion and use of mixed methods research within counselling and psychotherapy research.

Literature on mixed methods research

After having reviewed various published descriptions Johnson, Onwuegbuzie and Turner (2007) offered the following definition of mixed methods research:

Mixed methods research is the type of research in which a researcher or team of researchers combines elements of qualitative and quantitative research approaches (e.g., use of qualitative and quantitative viewpoints, data collection, analysis, inference techniques) for the broad purposes of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration. (2007, p. 123)

Although mixed methods research has become a recognised research approach in its own right, it has a history where academic disagreement and discord remained prevalent and embedded. The fundamental idea that qualitative and quantitative research approaches could be used in combination within a single research approach was rejected by many researcher-academics. Debate was particularly vociferous in the 1980s – a period which came to be known as the *paradigm wars* (Tashakkori & Teddie, 1998). The fundamental issue of concern was encapsulated in the *incompatibility hypothesis* (Howe, 1988) where the contention made was that the philosophical assumptions underpinning qualitative and quantitative research methods were so conflicting that they simply could not be combined in any meaningful way. Creswell and Plano Clarke (2007) have used the term *worldviews* to capture the idea that there may be some assumed fundamental and different sets of research approaches, research paradigms and research-based philosophies which are seen as essentially unmixable.

One way to understand the historic debate around mixed methods is to consider the involvement of: (a) ontology – the nature of existence; (b) epistemology – how knowledge about existence might be acquired; and (c) the relationship between the researcher and the researched. By examining these three areas the reasons for controversy around mixed methods research should become apparent.

Historically quantitative methods have been associated with the ontological position of *realism* where knowledge is seen to pre-exist and that there is a world to be discovered out there which is independent of who may be observing it. In contrast, qualitative methods are associated with *relativism* which

argues that the world is created by the human mind and that there is no single reality; there can be multiple realities. So, here we have a critical contrast; realism sees reality as objective and fixed whereas relativism sees reality as subjective and fluid (McBeath, 2022).

From an epistemological perspective, quantitative methods have been associated with *positivism* which contends that knowledge can be reliably acquired by following the scientific method (empiricism) and that we must not go beyond what we can observe. Here we have an approach which contends that only “factual knowledge” gained through observation and measurement is trustworthy. In contrast, there is an *interpretivist-constructivist* position which contends that knowledge is culturally, socially, and cognitively created. Here we have a view that science (research) is subjective, sometimes linked to power, and therefore alternative versions of reality can - should? - co-exist. This is another critical contrast: positivism values objectivity and the discovery of meaning whereas the interpretivist-constructivist and social constructionist positionings values subjectivity and the creation and interpretation of meaning(s) (Finlay, 2006).

Epistemological choices are also revealed in the relationship between the researcher and the researched. Positivism is aligned with a belief that it is necessary and possible for the researcher to be detached from the research process (dualism) in order to remain objective and value free. The assumption here is that the values and beliefs of the researcher will, or should, not bias or influence the research process. In contrast, the interpretivist-constructivist position would contend that people cannot be separated from their knowledge and that all research is influenced and shaped by the pre-existing theories and worldviews of researchers. The critical contrast here is between the researcher as a “detached scientist” whose biography will not influence the discovery of knowledge and the researcher as a “co-creator of knowledge” whose biography will inevitably influence the research process (Finlay, 2006).

The critical contrasts that have been emphasised here serve to illustrate what was at the heart of the debate about mixed methods research and the basis for the significant and opposing predilections about qualitative and quantitative methods. Eventually there was a formal recognition of the value of mixed methods research and 2007 saw the launch of the *Journal of Mixed Methods Research* followed by the publication of influential books such as the *Handbook of Mixed Methods in Social & Behavioral Research* (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003) and *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research* (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). One of the factors that has helped to establish mixed methods as an accepted research approach has been its alignment with the philosophical position of *pragmatism* which Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004, p. 16) referred to as, “the philosophical

partner for mixed methods research.” Rather than choosing between competing epistemological positions, the pragmatic researcher follows the research question and adopts a “what works” process in the research process (Brierley, 2017).

It is important to emphasise that mixed methods research was not intended to replace qualitative and quantitative methods but to capitalise on the strengths of both approaches while also minimising the weaknesses of both approaches (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). So, what are the overarching advantages of mixed methods research? Perhaps the best account has been offered by Landrum and Garza (2015):

We argue that together, quantitative and qualitative approaches are stronger and provide more knowledge and insights about a research topic than either approach alone. While both approaches shed unique light on a particular research topic, we suggest that methodologically pluralistic researchers would be able to approach their interests in such a way as to reveal new insights that neither method nor approach could reveal alone. (2015, p. 207)

In some academic circles mixed methods research has been seen as a unifying approach within the field. The combination of both qualitative and quantitative approaches has been referred to more positively as the “transformative paradigm” (Mertens, 2007; Williams, 2020) and the “third research paradigm” (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). In other circles, *pluralistic qualitative research* (Frost & Bailey-Rodriguez, 2020) is embraced as reflecting a postmodern view where life is seen as contradictory and messy, where no one version of theoretical or methodological truth is privileged.

Mixed methods research offers a number of specific advantages. These include the important notion of *triangulation* where qualitative and quantitative data sets are compared or synthesised to explore the coherence (or divergence) of findings. Other advantages include the potential to identify new research questions from conflicting data.

Mixed methods research thus has one key advantage which is ability to engage complexity. Where quantitative findings supplement qualitative, it can facilitate the generalisation of research findings while identifying the nuanced experiences of individuals.

The challenges of doing mixed methods research

While mixed methods research may well offer exciting opportunities for research in counselling and psychotherapy, it also poses significant challenges. As noted by Regnault, Willgoss and Barbic (2018), mixed methods research requires

a demanding skills-set requiring expertise in both qualitative and quantitative methods (or in various qualitative methods). The research approach is also resource intensive due to the amount of data collected and the time it takes to complete both qualitative and quantitative phases of a research project. For these reasons, mixed methods research is best undertaken by a team of researchers.

Perhaps one of the greatest challenges of mixed methods research is in acquiring sufficient knowledge to do it effectively. While single research methods such as Reflexive Thematic Analysis offer a relatively clear structure and are comparatively straightforward for novice researchers to understand and implement, the depth and breadth of knowledge required to competently implement mixed methods research is considerable. From the authors experience with psychotherapy research-based doctorates there is a need for mixed methods research to be taught in a structured way. It is simply too demanding an approach to be learnt second-hand from research publications for example.

An excellent student-based account of the challenges in learning about mixed methods research comes from Myers-Coffman et al. (2021) who describe their experiences and challenges of learning about the approach and then implementing a specific piece of research over an eleven-week structured learning course. One of the most important factors to emerge from the account was the presence of a skilled and knowledgeable teacher described with these words:

The course instructor has a rich background in MMR pedagogy and teaching experiences. She is well versed in various MMR designs, having collaborated with other experts in MMR research studies and utilized this expertise in several research projects of her own. She was able to guide us on conceptual and methodological levels. Her extensive experience in MMR provided a unique opportunity for the course set up. (2021, p. 33)

This description serves a valuable purpose in raising the question – how widespread is knowledge about mixed methods research amongst those with a teaching role in counselling and psychotherapy? (This question was one that featured in the quantitative element of this research project.)

Myers-Coffman et al. (2021) offer an engaging account of a staged approach to acquiring mixed methods research knowledge and skills. Perhaps not surprisingly, they emphasised the particular challenges of data integration which is a key component of mixed methods research. As students faced with the challenges of doing a mixed methods research project Myers-Coffman et al. (2021) offer the following conclusion:

It is imperative to rigorously train researchers in mixed methods research at varying levels of advancement (i.e., introductory, intermediate, and advanced). (2021, p. 32)

With an awareness of these debates in the background, the authors set out to explore the views of counselling/psychotherapy research students and supervisors about mixed methods research.

Method

Online Survey

An online survey was used to capture both quantitative and qualitative data with a combination of Likert scale questions, free text and story stem opportunities being used. The survey content was derived from discussions with academic colleagues and a review of relevant literature. The survey was piloted on four research literate psychotherapists before a final version was consolidated. The survey was focused on:

- Knowledge about mixed methods research
- Possible advantages of mixed methods research
- Views on combining qualitative and quantitative data
- The importance of knowing about mixed methods research for researchers.

The online survey had an introduction that set out the purpose of the research. Survey respondents were required to click on a *consent box* to indicate that they had understood the purpose of the research and that they wished to proceed through the survey. The anonymity of respondents was emphasised, and IP addresses were purposefully not collected in the survey database. The survey contained links to the data privacy policies of the organisation hosting the survey which confirmed GDPR compliance. A contact email address to one of the researchers was shown on the survey introductory page.

The analysis of the free text comments about respondents' choice of research method was guided by the 6-step process of Reflexive Thematic Analysis as developed by Braun and Clarke (2006, 2019) and undertaken by the first two authors (AM and SB-C). The 6 stages are as follows:

- Data immersion, which involves intimate familiarisation with the data;
- Preliminary coding, guided by a focus on ideas and issues that are then assigned a unique identity, for instance colour coding;

- Clustering and creation of themes from codes to a broader, higher order of meaning;
- Data saturation reached when no new codes or themes become apparent;
- Review of themes, individually and within the research team to confirm whether they remain meaningful and stable;
- Writing up the themes, as a final element in meaning-making.

Braun, Clarke and Weate (2016) have emphasised that the process of analysis is an active and recursive one which can involve the researcher moving forwards and backwards through the six stages of analysis.

Story Completion

The online survey utilised what is known as the *story completion method* (Moller, Clarke, Braun, Tischner & Vossler, 2020). Here the primary focus is on offering survey respondents the start of a story which is called the *story stem* and then asking – *what happens next?* In other words, survey respondents are offered the opportunity to complete a story based on a scenario or a story beginning which has been created by the researcher.

There are only a few published studies using the story completion method (e.g., Shah-Beckley, Clarke & Thomas, 2018; McPherson, 2022) but it has been enticingly described as, “The best new method for qualitative data collection you’ve never even heard of” (Clarke, Braun, Frith & Moller, 2019). Some of the key advantages of the story completion method include its theoretical flexibility, the fact of being resource-light and the way it offers survey respondents an unusual opportunity to offer their own creativity.

The story stem used in the survey was:

Kate is planning her research project for her psychotherapy doctorate. She is interested to explore the issue of compassion fatigue in therapists. She knows that she wants to explore the individual experience of compassion fatigue and so will use some form of qualitative research method. But she also wants to get an idea of how common compassion fatigue is across the profession.

Kate is going to discuss how to progress her research with her supervisor (What could happen next? - feel free to add what might be seen as a story of what might happen).

Sampling

A purposive sampling approach was used to identify potential survey respondents, and the social media platforms *LinkedIn* and *Facebook* were used as primary sources. These platforms contain the professional profiles of many hundreds of self-identified psychotherapists. The use of social media to draw samples for research into therapy related issues can be found in a growing number of studies (Lidden, Kingerlee & Barry, 2017; McBeath, 2019; McBeath, du Plock & Bager-Charleson, 2020). The researchers also used their academic networks to both publicise the survey and to identify suitable survey respondents.

The Metanoia (UK) Research Ethics Committee gave ethical approval for the research. The Metanoia Institute’s programmes are validated by Middlesex University.

Results

Several different sets of data comprise the results:

- Quantitative survey results
- Reflexive Thematic Analysis of the free text survey data
- Qualitative findings arising from the story completion

Quantitative survey results

The survey attracted 125 responses. From this number, 70 respondents identified as research students, 35 identified as research supervisors and a further 20 identified as “other” which included descriptions such as “therapist,” “practitioner,” “tutor” and “psychotherapist.” The first survey question asked respondents how knowledgeable they were about mixed methods research and Figure 1 shows the results.

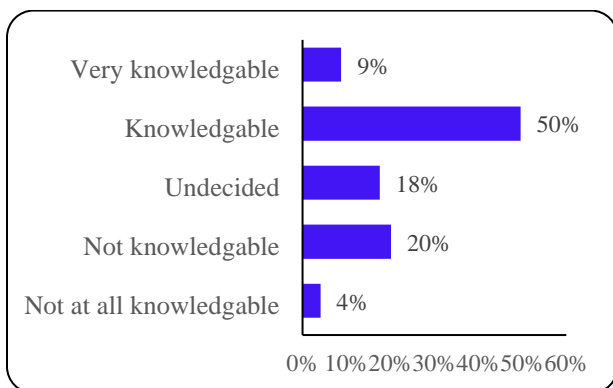


Figure 1: How knowledgeable are you about mixed methods research?

The data shown in Figure 1 indicates that knowledge about Mixed Methods Research across both research students and research supervisors was not really that widespread with 59%, in total, indicating that they were either *very knowledgeable* (9%) or *knowledgeable* (50%). Just under a quarter (24%), in total, indicated that they were *not knowledgeable* about mixed methods research (20%) or were *not at all knowledgeable*; a further 18% were *undecided*. There were no significant data differences between research students and research supervisors.

When asked how confident respondents were that qualitative and quantitative data could be meaningfully combined, there was a clear and positive majority view as shown in Figure 2.

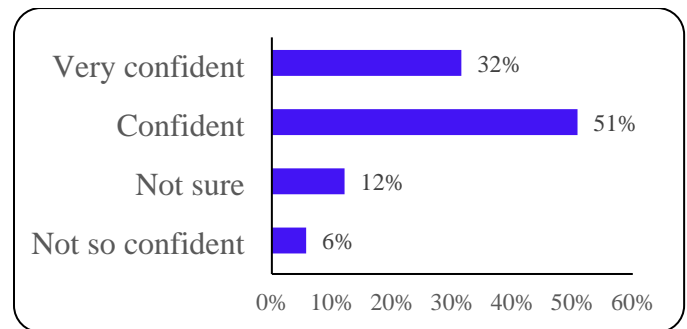


Figure 2: How confident are you that qualitative and quantitative data can be meaningfully combined?

Overall, 83% considered they were either *very confident* (32%) or *confident* (51%) that qualitative and quantitative data could be meaningfully combined which, of course, is a central tenet of mixed methods research. Perhaps reflecting more knowledge of research methods, a significantly greater percentage of research supervisors expressed themselves *very confident* (50%) compared to research students (27%).

In a multiple response question survey respondents were asked what potential advantages there might be in combining qualitative and quantitative data in a single research project. The data are shown in Figure 3.

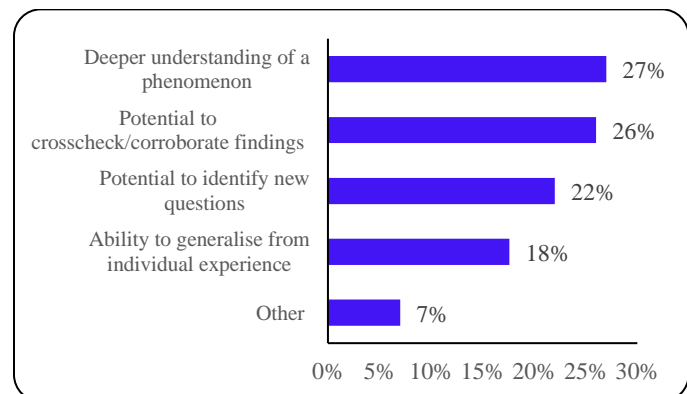


Figure 3: Potential advantages of combining qualitative and quantitative data

Survey respondents gave quite clear views about the potential advantages of combining qualitative and quantitative data with *achieving a deeper understanding of a phenomenon* (27%) and *potential to crosscheck/corroborate findings* (26%) being the most popular responses. A further 22% of all responses were recorded for *the potential to identify new research questions* followed by the *ability to generalise from individual experience* (18%). This pattern of responses reaffirms some of the key established reasons for conducting mixed methods research (Hesse-Biber, 2010; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009).

Of all responses 7% fell into the “other” responses category and referenced a number of advantages in combining qualitative and quantitative data such as the “ability to transcend fixed paradigms” and “the potential to bring forth contradictions.” However, there were several comments offered that clearly viewed mixed methods research as having some potential organisational and professional advantages. Here are some examples:

“Greater acceptance within the medical profession and the NHS than pure qualitative research”

“Increases acceptance from those individuals/organisations who might be in positions of power/authority”

“More robust for policy influence”

“Credibility”

“The ability to produce or assess actionable findings”

These comments are important in suggesting that perceptions of the value of mixed methods research has a reach beyond academic and research domains and, indeed, may potentially lend added credibility within organisational and policy making settings.

When survey respondents were asked how important it was for researchers in counselling and psychotherapy to have a working knowledge of mixed methods research the response pattern was emphatic as shown in Figure 4.

Overall, 88% considered it was either *very important* (44%) or *important* (44%) for researchers in counselling and psychotherapy to have a working knowledge of mixed methods research. Only 4% disagreed with 8% *unsure*.

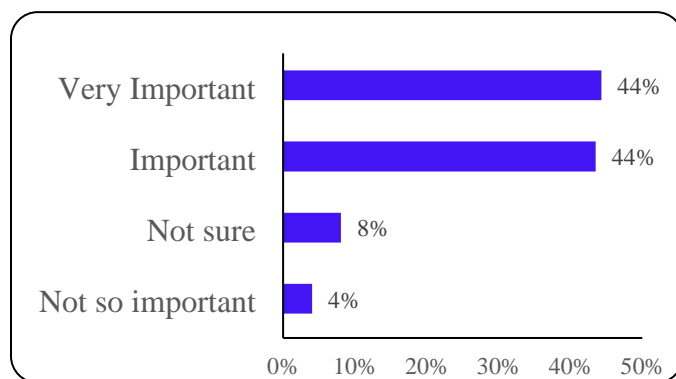


Figure 4: How important is it for researchers in counselling and psychotherapy to have a working knowledge of mixed methods research?

Reflexive Thematic Analysis of the free text survey data

Within the survey there was firstly a question which offered respondents the opportunity of contributing free text comments about why they might choose a particular approach to research – i.e., quantitative methods, qualitative methods, or mixed methods research – and they produced a considerable amount of rich qualitative data. We offered, secondly, the previously mentioned story stem opportunity for respondents to complete a fictional story about research options.

A total of 123 survey respondents offered free text comments about their choice of a preferred research approach; this is 98% of the total number of respondents. The breakdown for a preferred research method was *qualitative* (52%), *a mixture of qualitative and quantitative* (47%) and *quantitative* (1%).

Four themes were created from the qualitative free text data about reasons why they would choose a *qualitative* research method:

- What people have been taught or done
- To study participants’ lived experience
- Identification with a philosophical position or methodological approach
- A rejection of quantitative methods.

These themes stood out and are illustrated by the following selected verbatim comments from survey respondents.

What people have been taught or have done

I have been informed that it is better to focus on one or the other, rather than the mix to provide as solid knowledge as possible and use my time efficiently.

It's all I was mostly taught. At Metanoia mixed methods was discouraged it felt like.

That's what I was taught and the methodology type of my doctorate.

Qualitative methodology is the one that the candidates I supervise have mainly tended to use.

Comments such these suggest that a preference for qualitative research methods reflects a preference for teaching qualitative methods and also some reluctance to explore mixed methods research.

To study participants' lived experience

I am most interested in more in-depth experiences of participants, and qualitative methods seem to work well for that.

Because you get an insight into people's lived experiences. I find it hard to believe you can capture this data solely through statistics and each individuals' experiences are unique.

Because I am interested in a detailed examination of participants' lived experiences.

Reference to studying the lived experience of research participants using qualitative methods was strongly evidenced in the qualitative data.

Identification with a philosophical position

Because these approaches align with my ontological and epistemological values as a person and as a practicing psychotherapist.

My epistemology is social constructionism and I tend towards critical realism so this suggests a qualitative methodology.

The value of the humanistic, subjective, interpretative draws me towards qualitative methods.

These comments evidence a knowledge and awareness of some of the philosophical and methodological assumptions that can underpin qualitative research methods.

A rejection of quantitative methods

Because I am not drawn towards figures and a more quantitative methodology as I do not believe in a fixed and rigid answer or truth to reality.

I prefer qualitative to quantitative research given its focus on exploring phenomena rather than quantifying. I enjoy the depth rather than the focus on statistical methods and representative samples.

As a trainee counselling psychologist, I am very interested in meaning and quantitative methods do not provide rich enough data to make meaning out of.

These comments are unambiguous in reflecting a belief that quantitative research methods do not allow the depth and variety of lived experience to be adequately explored.

From the reasons given by survey respondents for preferring a *mixed methods* approach to research – three themes were identified. These were: 1) Maximising strengths and minimising weaknesses; 2) Advantages of mixed methods research; 3) Depth of understanding.

Maximising strengths and limiting weaknesses - There was clear evidence from survey respondents of an awareness that mixed methods can capitalise on the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative research methods while also limiting their weaknesses. Here are some example verbatim comments,

Both methodologies have strength and limitations, therefore a mixed approach is more likely to cover the limitations of either.

I feel that there is value to both quantitative and qualitative research. When combining both methods the methods can outweigh the limitations of the other.

Both quantitative and qualitative research suffer from epistemic biases and limitations which mixed methods research can attempt to address to a certain extent.

The strength of one method can surmount any weakness in the other and effectively provide more robust results. For example, the process of drawing out an individual's meaning making of his or her experience in a qualitative study may identify key factors or processes that a quantitative study might overlook.

Advantages of mixed methods research - Within the comments around reasons for choosing a mixed methods approach there were several comments about some specific advantages of mixed methods research.

Both are important to address a research question. Quant to gain information from a large number of people and so that findings are more generalisable, and qual to get depth and real understanding of experiences.

I believe that the combination of methods can be persuasive. People respond to statistics often, they can “grab the headlines.” Adding the voices of individuals, can really bring focus and increase the engagement with the results.

Numbers can give you an indication of scale, which feels important and can provide credibility in the scientific community. Qualitative can give you insight beyond numbers to help make decisions and find alternative ways forward.

Depth of understanding – Several comments celebrated the depth of insight possible:

Love the depth of insight with qual. It is exploratory, dynamic, creative. However, I like to support my qual by validating with a robust sample size. It provides a depth to the research - ensures the rigour/trustworthiness while still having the depth of qualitative.

Using more than one method of analysis has the potential to provide much more depth.

Above all else I think mixed methods can add a depth of understanding that can allow the experiences of individuals to come alive and be felt.

Qualitative findings arising from the story completion

This story stem was completed by 39% of all survey respondents with over a third of story completions (35%) containing more than 100 words. The total number of words offered across all story completions was 3848 which is slightly more than half the total word count of this paper. The distribution of story completion by word count – i.e. how many words were in story completions – is shown in Figure 5.

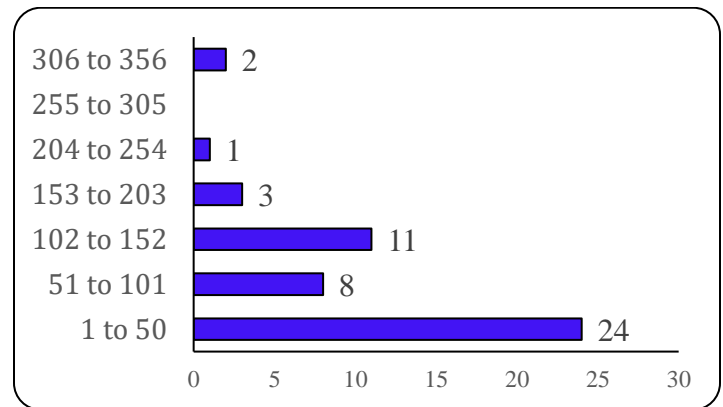


Figure 5: Story completions shown by word count

The story completion adds an intentionally *playful* (Braun et al., 2019) and creative dimension to the survey. Story writing is an often-used method in reflective practice, aimed to “make explicit what we think about things” (Carten & Gradin, 2001). This is different from regular responses to questions. From reflective practice research in nursing, Bolton (2005, p. 9) asserts that “If we asked people to talk about their values in abstract terms, we... received responses. By asking them to tell [write] stories...we were able to see something of the how values reveal themselves in a complex, varied and shifting way in practice.”

The data analysis remained guided by Reflexive Thematic Analysis, which in turn can highlight both surface, semantic and latent, underlying themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The latter emphasises the importance of reflexive transparency in terms of the researchers’ interpretation and positioning in the research. Although working as co-researchers the initial analysis was conducted by Sofie guided by an interest in “narrative knowing” (Polkinghorne, 1991; Bager-Charleson, 2003; Bager-Charleson et al., 2018). This included paying attention to:

- how the participants organise experiences and events into a story;
- how narratives convey and produce personal, social and cultural values and beliefs about self and others; and
- how the stories communicate and capture pace, emphasis and rhythm of the spoken words.

The important supervisor

All responses included firstly and as suggested, at least some references to supervisors. It was clear that supervisors had a big impact on the research trajectory and approach. One said that ‘the supervisor can help Kate to clarify what she wants to capture.’

The responses highlighted, however, what impact the supervisor's own knowledge and view on methodology had in the research student.

One said:

It should be noted that the supervisor has to be open to considering a mixed method approach and be comfortable with thinking quantitatively, if the supervisor [is not] happy with a mixed method it is not going to happen. Or Katie may have to consider looking for another supervisor.

This was supported by others, for instance, the participant who said, "I would warn Kate that... getting to grips with one method sufficiently in depth is probably enough."

Others said: "I think that her supervisor might ask her to focus on one goal instead of trying to meet both" and "Kate's supervisor will suggest that these are two separate projects [and] might steer her away from numerical analysis."

Another stated that "[it's too] ambitious for her to combine approaches because how would she establish her ontological and epistemological values and assumptions in two very different paradigms?"

Some pointed at a solution of adding a supervisor, for instance, one saying: "Kate's research supervisor is an expert in qualitative research and has little experience of quantitative research. They agree that they need to identify an external source of quantitative research expertise."

The supervisory support could, in turn, take many forms. The following story illustrates a not unusual story-line that moves from good intentions via problem and crisis to happy ending. It also refers to supervision in terms of:

- space for discussions with help to "funnel ideas"
- a "holding" of anxieties around dealing with "unknowns", and
- the offering of knowledge and sources of information

Kate discusses with her supervisor that she wants to explore the lived experience of compassion fatigue within the counselling and psychotherapy professions. However, she also wants to understand how widespread this phenomenon is across the professions. She is concerned that it will detract from the lived experience.

Kate's supervisor reassures her that it is possible to do both. She can explore the lived experience of compassion fatigue AND gather numeric data without diminishing the phenomenological aspect. Her supervisor, understanding the dilemma, wonders if Kate has considered a mixed -methods approach.

Kate responds that this feels out of her depth and worries about her own lack of knowledge, the ethical complications, and that it seems complicated.

The supervisor, understanding Kate's concern, signposts her to a couple of books where mixed-method approaches are discussed clearly with several examples given and also points to some journal papers where the lived experience has successfully been "mixed" with numerical data.

The significance of the research question

Kate's decision hinged, for most, on her research question and to what extent the question lends itself to be explored through qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods research. One participant explained this in the following way:

Kate has already established her research idea or research question, so she needs to identify which methodology will suit her question, she has already thought about employing qualitative methods, however, the research question also fits the quantitative methods since she wants to also to have an idea of how common compassion fatigue is across the profession.

Another highlighted how justification of the research ultimately rests on whether there "is there a gap in existing research and, if so, what is that" to then let the methodology develop from there.

Research impact

Reaching out with the research was another important factor. As will be expanded on later, one referred to an interest in adding a larger data sampling through survey based: "Kate really wanted to ensure that her research leads to developing something which could make a practical and tangible difference to the profession."

Understandings about mixed methods

The majority described Kate's choice of mixed methods research in terms of her combining a survey with interviews. Two referred to her using qualitative research at the start; one suggested focus groups and the other interviews. The rest suggested a survey to start, with follow-up interview invites. Below is another illustration of the "happy ending" scenario, and how supervision can combine open discussions and "funnelling of ideas" combined with emotional holding and adding information and knowledge:

Kate approaches her supervisor with lots of ideas how she might best research compassion fatigue including using quantitative and qualitative methods, however, is stuck on

how to marry competing philosophies of these methods. Kate really wanted to ensure that her research leads to developing something which could make a practical and tangible difference to the profession.

Her supervisor Agatha was also interested in this area of research and therefore was brimming with advice and avenues Kate could explore. At first Kate was unsure if Agatha understood what she was trying to achieve, as some of the discussion seemed to veer off from where Kate was, however over several months they got to know each other, and Agatha supported Kate in funnelling her ideas to shape her research into a coherent project.

Kate read about many different research methods, and methodologies, and with Agatha's help was able to decide that for this project, using an online survey would give her the best chance to see what the scale of the problem may be, including if compassion fatigue had increased, and why, for example did people talk about covid and working from home. She also chose to set up some focus groups with a handful of therapists who indicated on the survey they would be willing to be contacted, where she thought she would present the findings from the survey to elicit further insights and a deeper understanding of the phenomenon.

Kate was pleased that she used a mix of methods as part of her project which was still very much embedded in a qualitative philosophy but found she could use her quantitative results to create a punch and her qualitative data to provide the story.

What can qualitative research offer?

Several stories referred to Kate's original interest in qualitative research, possibly capturing their own research positioning. These accounts anchored Kate's interest as ultimately guided by seeking "deep insights into lived experience." References were for instance made to case study, phenomenology, and focus groups to "facilitate the exploration of individual experience." One suggested that Kate "also look at IPA or grounded theory as potential ways to design and analyse in-depth conversations with therapists who have had compassion fatigue [about what it feels like]. She might use autoethnography to explore her own experience of compassion fatigue."

Some emphasised the narrative nature of qualitative research. One said – as expanded upon further on, that: "Kate is a words person and so is comfortable with the qualitative side of things."

What can quantitative research offer?

Benefits from quantitative research were expanded on in terms of gaining information "across the profession." Some equated surveys with the use of closed questions. Some suggested that Kate used "large scale screening questionnaire for quant part" or "pre-existing psychometric measures" for her quantitative research, referring to benefits in terms of "establishing numerical figures/statistics that can be measured" and regarded mixed methods as means to "cross-check" and "corroborate findings."

Others highlighted benefits from a combination of closed and open questions. One said for instance:

The supervisor can help clarify what Kate would like to capture and what will be relevant to her research. There could be discussion around capturing data with closed questions in surveys or interviews with regards to how many people suffer from compassion fatigue, or what age/background they're from, and open questions to engage in the themes of what compassion fatigue MEANS to that person, to see commonalities and differences amongst the research participants through themes when analysing, but also to catch out individual voices that might otherwise gotten lost in only capturing generic statistical data. Gives a wider perspective of the research group.

Nuances in the narratives

Whilst the stories capture actual obstacles and opportunities with mixed methods research, they also communicate how researchers choose to punctuate and structure their stories- and plot lines about doing research in terms of good, bad, right, wrong, scary and exciting etc. Many used a valued endpoint (Gergen, 1988) in terms of the "happy ending" with mixed methods research, whilst for a few it was a "non-starter."

The stories also highlight participants' different choice of wording and emphasis. To use Polkinghorne's (1991) distinction, some emphasised "paradigmatic" knowing by focusing on facts and events, whilst others organised events guided by "narrative knowing" conveying experiences of the world in ways that integrate aspects like emotion, social context, and time.

The example below highlights how some described Kate *as a person* – for instance as a "words person" who sometimes is "comfortable" and other times "fearful" and/or "excite". "Fearful" was used by others potentially illustrating some of the narrators' own feelings. Also, accounts drawing on

expressions like “not really knowing,” “exploring options” and “possibilities opening up” seem to reflect some of the respondents’ methodological anchoring. These quotations highlight how shifting emotions and ambiguity may be regarded as relevant aspects of doing research given the focus of qualitative research on experience and meaning making.

Kate discusses options with her supervisor and decides that she wants to capture both quantitative and qualitative data. She is a words person and so is comfortable with the qualitative side of things. She feels slightly fearful of number and not really knowing how to crunch them to make a story. She hopes from the discussion with her supervisor that there is a solution she can work with. She wants depth of insight but also breadth across the therapy profession. With help from her supervisor, she begins to explore the option of an online survey, where the quantitative data are analysed by the survey platform. From the survey she can recruit participants for follow-on interviews. Kate starts to feel excited about the possibilities opening up for her.

Others narrated in a more factual way, leaving emotional content out of their descriptions punctuated by expressions like “already established,” “already thought about,” and “wants/needs to”, “will suit,” “demands establishing,” “can be measured” and “cross-check”. Phrases like these implied a focus on more practical, rational sides of Kate as a researcher. The story below starts, for instance, by Kate “having already established” and finishes with “cross-check and corroborate findings.”

Kate has already established her research idea or research question, so she needs to identify which methodology will suit her question, she has already thought about employing qualitative methods, however, the research question also fits the quantitative methods since she wants to also to have an idea of how common compassion fatigue is across the profession which demands establishing numerical figures/ statistics that can be measured for her to explore their experiences and to potentially cross-check and corroborate findings.

The differences in how qualitative and quantitative researchers use words and writing style are an added layer that needs to be considered.

What can mixed methods research offer?

Although combining qualitative approaches is a significant possibility within mixed methods research (Frost & Rodriguez, 2020), only a qualitative plus quantitative mix of research was identified for Kate. “[Kate thinks that] mixed methods will provide context and detail to how people experience

compassion fatigue as well as an idea of how common it is across the profession”. Another said, “[Kate’s mixed methods] can combine methodologies that facilitate the exploration of individual experience [with] those who can investigate how present this phenomenon is”.

Some recommended starting first with qualitative: “starting with interviews to understand the experience of therapists [of] perhaps a handful of therapists only, Kate would then look to combine that with an online survey [and look at experience in relation to] what their roles are, perhaps where they are trained, how many hours of therapy they deliver... what they do for self-care [etc].”

Discussion and reflections

This study has tapped into research students’ and supervisors’ perceptions of mixed methods research. The account offered, drawing on participant quotations, remains descriptive and we assume the participants’ responses correspond to and reveal their views. As such, our results suggest the participants’ orientation rather than being a more factual analysis of the strengths and limitations of mixed methods research per se.

Interestingly, mixed methods research seems to be understood as largely a mixture of quantitative versus qualitative data and analysis. The idea of mixing qualitative methods to engage different perspectives and analysis at different levels is one that could be promoted further in research teachings.

The way quantitative and qualitative findings are engaged also needs further exploration and raises a number of epistemological questions. Beyond the procedures selected (e.g., story completion), there are implications of engaging qualitative research first as a sensitising exercise to identify the issues at stake versus utilising a survey first which provides that wider lens and context. The question then, is not simply, “Is mixed methods research a valid methodology?” but “What methods are most appropriate to answer the research question?” Further thought then needs to go into deciding whether the quantitative data or qualitative comes first (e.g., survey followed by interviews versus interviews followed up by survey). In the case of this study, the survey offered an initial context inviting further qualitative comment.

One overarching theme that was prevalent in both the quantitative and qualitative results was a marked optimism, especially amongst research students, about mixed methods being perceived as a *valid* research approach. This theme seemed to rest on a belief that quantitative and qualitative data can be meaningfully combined and that mixed methods

research offers an opportunity for a deeper and more varied understanding of life issues and psychological distress.

However, there were also some less positive findings; perhaps most significant, was the fact that there was limited knowledge about mixed methods research. This finding was linked, in some cases, to a lack of support for mixed methods research from both training institutes and from research supervisors.

From the perspective of research students, it seems that mixed methods research was thought to present significant challenges regarding the depth of knowledge and research skills required. From the story completion data, there were clear indications that research choices for students and their potential to engage with mixed methods often hinged on the knowledge and views of research supervisors. As one participant commented, "If the supervisor [is not] happy with a mixed method it is not going to happen." In similar vein, one participant indicated that she felt that mixed methods was "discouraged" at her place of study.

There is little doubt that research supervisors are pivotal in supporting students to acquire the demanding skill set and knowledge required by mixed methods research. As a first important step in supervising students wanting to engage in mixed methods approaches it is essential that research supervisors engage with two fundamental issues: students' level of knowledge about the approach and the limits of their own knowledge in this area.

The first issue has been concisely expressed by Plowwright (2013, p. 69):

One first step in this process is for tutors to be aware of how knowledgeable students are about research methodologies in general and mixed methods research.

Of course, in assessing how knowledgeable their research students might be about mixed method research supervisors should review their own knowledge and capability in this area; this is the second key issue.

In recognising the challenging nature of mixed methods approaches, Stockman (2015, p. 81) has considered the demands that might be made on research supervisors and makes a key observation that, "It is a positive step for instructors to recognise their own lack of knowledge". Stockman suggests that adopting a mixed methods approach to research presents particular challenges to both research students and research supervisors who could more effectively, "act as a facilitator of research, recognising the need to offer assistance beyond personal expertise" (2015, p. 83). In reinforcing this point Stockman (2015) sees the need for a

special type of research supervision for students favouring a mixed methods approach:

It is a positive step for instructors to recognise their own lack of knowledge (Bezzina & Saunders, 2014:118). In this case, there should be one (or more!) co-supervisors who are able to provide more focused support on certain aspects of the research (Halcomb & Andrew, 2009:158).

Stockman (2015, p. 81) concludes that, "The Ph.D. mentor becomes 'a broker' (Rich, 2014:135). He or she is no longer someone who knows everything, but someone who 'facilitates'".

Although this current research generated a large amount of data it is appropriate to reflect on the amount and quality of data obtained. Regarding the online survey, the response total of 125 was lower than hoped for though still large enough to demonstrate a clear prevalence and preference of views around mixed methods research. Most of the data patterns were unambiguous and there would not have been any significant benefit in statistical analysis of the data.

Evaluation of story completion data is less straightforward. Completed story returns came from a minority of the total survey sample (39%) and this raises the issue of how representative the data might be. Analysis of the data revealed that a large amount of story completion material was offered by a few very communicative survey respondents. In other words, 36% of the total story completion word count was accounted for by just 6 survey respondents. This finding indicates that while story completion data can offer rich and varied accounts, there must be caution in assessing how representative they may be.

One question that is worth considering when reviewing story completion research concerns sample size: How many story completions do you need? Is the number of story completions reported in this paper (i.e., 49) a reasonable number? There is no firm sense of agreement on what a "good" sample size for story completion research would be (Clarke et al., 2019) but it pays to look at some published research to get some idea of the sample sizes being reported. For example, a study by Wood, Wood and Balaam (2017) focused on virtual reality pornography reported 45 completed story stems. In another story completion study on therapists' and non-therapists' constructions of heterosex, Shah-Beckley, Clarke, and Thomas (2018) reported two sample sizes of 49 and 51. Compared to these two studies the sample size of 49 reported in this paper is comparable and so reasonable.

Beyond sample size, questions could be raised about the nature of the data obtained by story completion approaches. In this case, it could be argued that the stories obtained reflect participants' perceptions of common practices but we cannot

assume their replies necessarily constitute their actual beliefs, values and/or lived experience. Another qualitative methodology, perhaps in addition to the story completion, could deepen the experiential component.

Personal reflections

We acknowledge our prediction – *bias* even – towards mixed methods research. It seems important also to acknowledge how we were personally impacted.

Alistair McBeath and Sofie Bager-Charleson took on the bulk of the data collection and analysis which was not without its frustrations: *We were particularly frustrated hearing the lament that students were not being supported to pursue mixed methods research. On a few occasions when a particular research focus was described, it was possible to infer the identity of the research student involved and reading their frustrations at not being supported with a mixed methods research approach felt distinctly frustrating. On two occasions, a specific training organisation was explicitly named and described as not supporting mixed methods research. We felt that students were potentially being let down by their training organisations and their individual research supervisors (a few of whom were known to the authors). It felt discouraging to see that some research students were clearly being told that quantitative and qualitative methods were mutually incompatible which must, in part, reflect the entrenched and, to our minds, out of date views of some research supervisors.*

The third author, Linda Finlay, was solely involved in the latter stages of writing up: *I particularly support the use of mixing qualitative approaches pluralistically, readily owning some caution about mixing quantitative and qualitative approaches. However, I am increasingly persuaded there is value in encompassing multiple perspectives. I have valued working with colleagues who have quantitative research skills and own my inexperience here. I was touched by the students' enthusiasm for mixed methods and the apparent confusion some felt when confronted by a supervisor's outright rejection of mixed methods. It frustrates me when I see entrenched positions rather than using the opportunities to reflexively explore what is opened up and closed down by any one methodology or study. I think all researchers should try to be both thoughtful and humble, and that we should do more to own our scientific-ideological interests and agendas.*

We believe our research has identified some important perceptions about mixed methods research which also indicate the value of this methodology. We concede that others may have seen points in the data which we missed because of the lens we have used. Nevertheless, we hope that our findings will be of interest and will help nudge those not

yet convinced by mixed methods research to at least consider the rich possibilities which can be potentially opened up.

Endpiece

The research findings focused on knowledge, perceptions and experiences of mixed methods research reveal that there is a considerable appetite for this methodology amongst research students in doctoral counselling and psychotherapy programmes in the UK. However, knowledge about mixed methods as a viable research approach is patchy. Having a working knowledge of mixed methods was seen as being crucially important for those engaged in research within counselling and psychotherapy. There was some evidence that mixed methods are not actively supported by some training institutions and research supervisors. The challenges of doing mixed methods research were clearly articulated by research students and highlight the need for research supervisors to review their own knowledge about mixed methods and those of their research students. It has been suggested that the demands of mixed methods research require research supervisors to recognise their own limitations and signpost students to other avenues of support and expertise.

References

- Bager-Charleson, S., & McBeath, A. G. (2021a). Containment, compassion and clarity. Mixed-methods research into supervision during doctoral research for psychotherapists and counselling psychologists. *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research*, 22(3), 689–707.
- Bager-Charleson, S., & McBeath, A. G. (2021b). What support do therapists need to do research? A review of studies into how therapists experience research, *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research*, 21(3), 555–569. <https://doi.org/10.1002/capr.12432>
- Bager-Charleson, S., Du Plock, S., & McBeath, A. G. (2018). Therapists have a lot to add to the field of research, but many don't make it there: A narrative thematic inquiry into counsellors' and psychotherapists' embodied engagement with research. *Language and Psychoanalysis*, 7(1), 4–22. <https://doi.org/10.7565/landp.v7i1.1580>
- Bager-Charleson, S. (2003). *The parent's school? Narrative research about parental involvement in education*. Lund: Student literature.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <http://doi:10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2019). Reflecting on reflexive thematic analysis. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and*

- Health*, 11(4), 589–597.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/2159676X.2019.1628806>
- Braun, V., Clarke, V., Hayfield, N., Frith, H., Malson, H., Moller, N., & Shah-Beckley, I. (2019). Qualitative story completion: Possibilities and potential pitfalls, *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 16(1), 136–155. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14780887.2018.153639>
- Braun, V., Clarke, V., & Weate, P. (2016). Using thematic analysis in sport and exercise research. In B. Smith, & A. C. Sparkes (Eds.), *Routledge handbook of qualitative research in sport and exercise* (pp. 191–205). Routledge.
- Bolton, G. (2005). *Reflective practice: Writing and professional development*. Sage.
- Brierley, J. A. (2017). The role of a pragmatist paradigm when adopting mixed methods in behavioural accounting research. *International Journal of Behavioural Accounting and Finance*, 6(2), 140–154.
<https://doi.org/10.1504/IJBAF.2017.10007499>
- Cameron, R., & Miller, P. (2007). “Mixed methods research: Phoenix of the paradigm wars”, *21st Annual Australian & New Zealand Academy of Management (ANZAM) Conference*, Sydney, December 2007.
- Carter, D., & Gradin, S. (2001). *Writing as reflexive action*. Longman.
- Clarke, V., Braun, V., Frith, H., & Moller, N. (2019). Editorial introduction to the special issue: Using story completion methods in qualitative research. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 16(1), 1–20.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14780887.2018.1536378>
- Creswell, J. W. (2003). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (2nd ed.). Sage.
- Creswell, J., & Plano Clark, V. (2007). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research*. Sage.
- Finlay, L. (2006). Mapping methodology. In L. Finlay, & C. Ballinger (Eds.), *Qualitative research for allied health professionals: Challenging choices* (pp. 9–29). Wiley.
- Frost, N., & Bailey-Rodriguez, D. (2020). Doing qualitatively driven mixed methods and pluralistic qualitative research. In S. Bager-Charleson, & A. G. McBeath (Eds.), *Enjoying research in counselling and psychotherapy. Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods research* (pp. 137–160). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Gergen, M. M. (1988). Narrative structures in social explanation. In C. Antaki (Ed.), *Analysing social explanation* (pp. 94–112) Sage.
- Halcomb, E., & Andrew, S. (2009). Practical considerations for higher degree research students undertaking mixed methods projects. *International Journal of Multiple Research Approaches*, 3(2), 153–162.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/jan.13877>
- Hesse-Biber, S. N. (2010). *Mixed methods research: Merging theory with practice*. The Guilford Press.
- Howe, K. R. (1988). Against the quantitative-qualitative incompatibility thesis or dogmas die hard. *Educational Researcher*, 17(8), 10–16.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/1175845>
- Johnson, R. B., & Onwuegbuzie, A. J. (2004). Mixed methods research: A research paradigm whose time has come. *Educational Researcher*, 33, 14–26.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.3102/0013189X033007014>
- Johnson, R. B., Onwuegbuzie, A. J., & Turner, L. A. (2007). Toward a definition of mixed methods research. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, 1, 112–133.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1558689806298224>
- Johnson, R. B. (2017). Dialectical pluralism: A metaparadigm whose time has come. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, 11(2), 156–173.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1558689815607692>
- Landrum, B., & Garza, G. (2015). Mending fences: Defining the domains and approaches of quantitative and qualitative research. *Qualitative Psychology*, 2(2), 199–209. <https://doi.org/10.1037/qap0000030>
- Lidden, L., Kingerlee, R., & Barry, J. A. (2017). Gender differences in preferences for psychological treatment, coping strategies, and triggers to help-seeking. *British Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 57(1), 42–58.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/bjc.12147>
- Maxcy, S. J. (2003). Pragmatic threads in mixed method research in the social sciences: The search for multiple modes of inquiry and the end of the philosophy of formalism. In A. Tashakkori, & C. Teddlie (Eds.), *Handbook of mixed methods in the social and behavioural sciences* (pp. 51–89). Sage.
- McBeath, A. G. (2022). Mixed methods research: The case for the pragmatic researcher. In S. Bager-Charleson, & A. G. McBeath (Eds.), *Supporting research in counselling and psychotherapy: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods research* (pp. 187–205). Palgrave: MacMillan
- McBeath, A. G. (2019). The motivations of psychotherapists: An in-depth survey. *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research*, 19(4), 377–387.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/capr.12225>
- McBeath, A. G., Bager-Charleson, S., & Abarbanel, A. (2019). Therapists and academic writing: “Once upon a time psychotherapy practitioners and researchers were the same people”. *European Journal for Qualitative Research in Psychotherapy*, 19, 103–116.
- McBeath, A. G., du Plock, S., & Bager-Charleson, S. (2020). The challenges and experiences of psychotherapists working remotely during the coronavirus pandemic. *Counselling & Psychotherapy Research*, 20(3), 394–405. <https://doi.org/10.1002/capr.12326>
- McPherson, A. (2022). “Are you analyzing me?” A story completion exploration into having a friend who is a psychotherapist. *European Journal for Qualitative Research in Psychotherapy*, 12, 64–80.
- Mertens, D. (2007). Transformative paradigm: Mixed methods and social justice. *Journal of Mixed methods research*, 1(3), 212–225. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1558689807302811>

- Moller, N., Clarke, V., Braun, V., Tischner, I., & Vossler, A. (2020). Qualitative story completion for counseling psychology research: A creative method to interrogate dominant discourses. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 68(3), 286–298. <https://doi.org/10.1037/cou0000538>
- Myers-Coffman, K., Ibrahim, M., Bryl, K., Junkin, J. S., & Bradt, J. (2021). Learning by doing: Student experiences in a mixed methods research course. *International Journal of Doctoral Studies*, 16, 31–46. <https://doi.org/10.28945/4683>
- Plowright, D. (2013). “To what extent do postgraduate students understand the principles of mixed methods in educational research?”. *International Journal of Multiple Research Approaches*, 7(1), 66–82. <https://doi.org/10.20853/31-5-1498>
- Polkinghorne, D. E. (1991). Narrative and self-concept. *Journal of Narrative & Life History*, 1(2-3), 135–153. <https://doi.org/10.1075/jnlh.1.2-3.04nar>
- Regnault, A., Willgoss, T., & Barbic, S. (2018). Towards the use of mixed methods inquiry as best practice in health outcomes research. *Journal of Patient Reported Outcomes*, 2(19), 1–4. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41687-018-0043-8>
- Rich, M. (2014). Learning research methods: How personalised should we be? *European Journal of Business Research Methods*, 12(2), 131–138. <https://doi.org/10.34190/JBRM.18.2.003>
- Shah-Beckley, I., Clarke, V., & Thomas, Z. (2018). Therapists’ and non-therapists’ constructions of heterosex: A qualitative story completion study. *Psychology and Psychotherapy: Theory, Research and Practice*, 93, 189–206. <https://doi.org/10.1111/papt.12203>
- Stockman C. (2015). Achieving a doctorate through mixed methods research. *The Electronic Journal of Business Research Methods*, 13(2), 74–84.
- Tashakkori, A., & Teddlie, C. (2003). *Handbook of mixed methods in social & behavioral research*. Sage.
- Teddlie, C., & Tashakkori, A. (2009). *Foundations of mixed methods research: Integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches in the social and behavioral sciences*. Sage.
- Williams, R. T. (2020). The paradigm wars: Is MMR really a solution? *American Journal of Trade and Policy*, 7(3), 79–84. <https://doi.org/10.18034/ajtp.v7i3.507>
- Wood, M., Wood, G., & Balaam, M. (2017). ““They’re just tixel pits, man”: Disputing the “reality” of virtual reality pornography through the story completion method, *Proceedings of the 2017 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*, ACM, New York, 5439–5451.

About the Authors

Dr Alistair McBeath is a BPS Chartered psychologist and a UKCP registered Psychotherapist. He is a research supervisor at the New School of Psychotherapy and Counselling and the Metanoia Institute. He is a co-editor of the *European Journal for Qualitative Research in Psychotherapy*. Alistair considers himself to be a researcher-practitioner and is keen to promote this identity within the psychotherapy profession. He has published widely. With his colleague, Dr Sofie Bager-Charleson he has recently edited a book entitled *Supporting Research in Counselling and Psychotherapy*, published in 2022 by Palgrave McMillan.

Dr Sofie Bager-Charleson is a UKCP and BACP registered psychotherapist and supervisor. She works as Director of Studies for PhD and Doctoral Development at the Metanoia Institute, chairing the research group “Therapists as Research-informed Practitioners (TRP)” to support psychotherapists and counselling psychologists to become confident researchers. She is also Consultant at the New School of Psychotherapy and Counselling and the co-editor with Dr Alistair McBeath of the complementing text-books *Enjoying Research* and *Supporting Research in Counselling and Psychotherapy* - which can be accessed on this link *Supporting Research in Counselling and Psychotherapy: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Research* | SpringerLink

Dr Linda Finlay is an existentially-orientated, relational integrative Psychotherapist currently in private practice in the United Kingdom (UK). She also teaches psychology, counselling and research methodology at the Open University, UK. She has published widely. Her two most recent books are published by Sage: *Practical ethics in counselling and psychotherapy: A relational approach* and *The therapeutic use of self in counselling and psychotherapy*. Among her books relevant to research are two published by Wiley: *Phenomenology for therapists: Researching the lived world* and *Relational-centred research for psychotherapists* (written with Ken Evans). Her particular research interests include exploring relational dynamics and applying relational-reflexive approaches to investigate the lived experience of disability and trauma. She is currently Editor of the *European Journal for Qualitative Research in Psychotherapy* (www.EJQRP.org). Website: <http://lindafinlay.co.uk>