

# Mixed Methods Social Networks Research

*Design and Applications*

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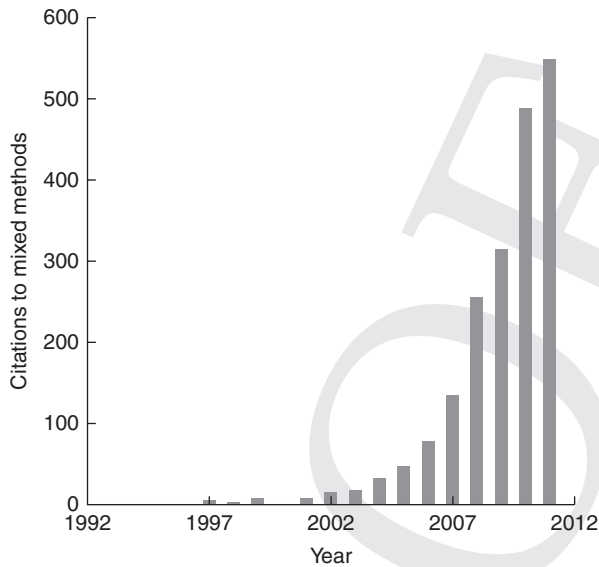
## Foreword

H. Russell Bernard

This book illustrates an important moment in social network analysis: the continued maturation of the field into a truly interdisciplinary science. The chapters represent the disciplines of anthropology, applied mathematics and statistics, communications research, demography, industrial engineering, management, political science, social psychology, and sociology.

The chapters also represent the continued maturation of social network analysis into a truly “normal science,” in Thomas Kuhn’s (1996:10) memorable phrase. In 1977, Samuel Leinhardt edited a volume titled *Social Networks: A Developing Paradigm*. The book had papers from social psychology, sociology, statistics and mathematics, and anthropology – the range of disciplines that, in 1977, was coalescing into what Leinhardt called a developing paradigm – that is, a normal science. Leinhardt was right. In 1993, Norman Hummon and Kathleen Carley analyzed the contents of the first 12 years of the journal *Social Networks* (1978–1989). The pattern of citations, they said, indicated the development of a normal science: The field was incremental (people “attend to each other’s work”) and there were “young scientists willing to base their careers on work in this field,” suggesting that “social networks as a specialty is in a ‘normal science’ phase rather than an early developmental phase” (pp. 103–104).

One characteristic of a normal science is the easy, unpretentious use of qualitative and quantitative data and analysis. This is the salutary result of the mixed methods movement. I use the word “movement” deliberately. As of April 2012, there were 2,100 citations to the term “mixed methods” in the Social Science Citation Index. As shown in Figure 1, the first occurrence of the term dates from 1993, with more than 80 percent since 2008. There is a *Journal of Mixed Methods Research* ([mmr.sagepub.com](http://mmr.sagepub.com)), several textbooks on mixed methods research (Creswell and



Plano Clark 2011; Greene 2007; Hesse-Biber 2010; Morse and Niehaus 2009), and a handbook of mixed methods research (Tashakkori and Teddlie 2010). What else could this possibly be if not a movement?

First, here is what it is not: It is not a discovery of the value of combining qualitative and quantitative data and analysis in the same study. In fact, the most normal thing about normal science is the uncomplicated, taken-for-granted mixing of qualitative and quantitative data and qualitative and quantitative analysis. That was the recipe for the conduct of science followed by Galileo in his observations about the surface of the moon (Galileo 1610). It was the recipe adopted by Adolphe Quételet, John Stuart Mill, and the other founders of social science in the nineteenth century. It was the recipe followed in the twentieth century by Donald Campbell in psychology, Franz Boas in anthropology, Paul Lazarsfeld in sociology, and so on. And what exercise in all of science is more of a mixing of the quantitative and the qualitative than poring over the results of a factor analysis and talking with one's colleagues – free-associating, really – about what to call a particular factor?

There is a well-known countercurrent, of course, an on-again, off-again “war between the quals and the quants,” as Peter Rossi (1994) called it, marked by periods of rapprochement and vitriol. One of Franz Boas's students, Paul Radin, accused his mentor of being *naturwissenschaftlich eingestellt* or science minded – what a disgrace! – and warned that this would lead ethnologists to the quantification of culture (Radin 1933:10). In contrast, one of my teachers, Oscar Lewis, a gifted

and prodigious ethnographer, observed with approval in 1953 that an increase in the use of quantification had been “one of the most significant developments in anthropological field work in recent years” (Lewis 1953:454). And in 1973, Sam Sieber argued – in the *American Journal of Sociology*, no less – for the integration of “qualitative fieldwork and survey research.” This “marriage of survey and fieldwork methodologies,” said Sieber, would produce “a new style of research” (p. 1337). The new style that Sieber described in 1973 would be indistinguishable from what is called mixed methods today.

The bottom line: Mixed methods is the natural order of science. It has never gone away, but it comes in and out of style in the social sciences. Which brings us to the current phenomenon, shown in Figure 1, a phenomenon that begs to be explained.

In grappling with this same question, Johnson et al. (2007:117), in the first issue of the *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, offered that the movement is a “reaction to the polarization between quantitative and qualitative research.” I would take it a step further. It’s a reaction against the all-too-successful effort by some colleagues in the humanistic, interpretive tradition in social science to define the word “qualitative” as meaning not-quantitative and to force students of social science to choose epistemological sides – humanism or science, understanding or explanation, qualitative or quantitative. The current mixed methods, a-plague-on-both-your-houses movement makes no such pernicious claims on the lives of young scholars. It is the development of an intellectual safe space where the “qual-quant” war is ignored and the result is an explosion of creativity and collaborative research across disciplines – like that in this book.

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