

FROM THE EDITORS

PUBLISHING MULTIMETHOD RESEARCH IN AMJ: A REVIEW AND BEST-PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS

“More isn’t always better, Linus. Sometimes, it’s just more.”

—Sabrina Fairchild (played by Julia Ormond) to Linus Larrabee (played by Harrison Ford) in the 1995 remake of the film *Sabrina* (Rudin & Pollack, 1995)

“Multimethod research”—defined as the use of more than one methodology in a single research project—offers a number of potential benefits. Indeed, the siren song of a multimethod approach seems to be growing ever stronger. The song promises numerous intuitively appealing strengths—for instance, the potential to generate and test theory in a single manuscript. Using multiple methods concurrently can also help researchers triangulate on the answer to their research question, enabling inferences that are high in both internal and external validity (Molina-Azorin, 2012). Moreover, multimethod designs can facilitate a more complete and accurate understanding of organizations, which are multidimensional and complex. Given no single research approach can tap into all of the various attributes of organizations, combining multiple approaches can enable important new insights (Daft & Lewin, 1990) that are both theoretically and practically valuable (Aguinis, Werner, Lanza Abbott, Angert, Park, & Kohlhausen, 2010).

The available evidence further suggests that, perhaps as a result of these benefits, multimethod research is more impactful than work that relies on only a single methodology. For instance, Molina-Azorin (2012) compared multi-method and mono-method articles published in *Strategic Management Journal* from 1980 to 2006 and identified a significant positive association between the use of a multimethod approach and citation counts. The magnitude of these effects was substantial: per the Social Science Index, the average multimethod article published during the period of the study received 59.13 citations, whereas the average mono-method article was cited 37.08 times. A similar analysis using Google Scholar revealed citation counts of 232.44 (multi-method) and 146.76 (mono-method), respectively. These results seemingly reinforce the

notion that, when it comes to research methodologies, more is better.

However, the benefits of multimethod research are accompanied by considerable challenges. Multimethod projects typically require more resources, effort, and time than mono-method research (Molina-Azorin, 2012). Additionally, different methodologies may be grounded in fundamentally different epistemological philosophies (Pratt, Kaplan, & Whittington, 2020), requiring scholars to carefully consider both whether and how integration might be possible (Tunarosa & Glynn, 2017). These hurdles can take a very real toll on multimethod papers: we have unfortunately seen many research projects that were lured in by the promises of a multimethod approach ending up dashed against the jagged rocks of rejection. In some cases, researchers combine methods in a way that is redundant rather than a value add. In others, the individual methods are well done, but the manuscript as a whole lacks theoretical and operational alignment. In still others, scholars select methods that are inappropriate given the state of the relevant literature. These are just some of the potential pitfalls associated with multimethod research, but they reveal an unfortunate truth: incorporating more methodologies into research projects isn’t *always* better. Sometimes, despite authors’ best efforts and intentions, it’s just more.

At AMJ, we are firm believers in the value of multimethod research. In addition to the previously noted benefits, incorporating multiple methods can help authors craft manuscripts that are consistent with the journal’s mission of publishing research that tests, extends, or builds strong theoretical frameworks *and* that empirically examines issues of high importance to managerial theory and practice. Further, multimethod research seems particularly helpful in addressing the urgent questions arising from our modern transformational times (Gruber, 2023). These kinds of transformational questions often occur at multiple levels of analysis and contain complex dynamics that are difficult to capture in a single study or with a single methodology. The cutting-edge research methodologies that we are

encouraging authors to submit (Langley, Bell, Bliese, LeBaron, & Gruber, 2023; von Krogh, Roberson, & Gruber, 2023) may also lend themselves especially well to multimethod partnerships. Our goal in this FTE is therefore to help authors capitalize on the many benefits of multimethod work while surmounting its limitations. We discuss the methodologies and underlying forms of scientific reasoning that form the “building blocks” of multimethod studies, review the types of multimethod research that have appeared in AMJ articles over the past several years, highlight the more common pitfalls we have observed in multimethod submissions, and conclude with actionable recommendations for conducting multimethod research that satisfies the journal’s publishing standards.

THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF MULTIMETHOD RESEARCH: DEDUCTIVE AND INDUCTIVE SCIENTIFIC REASONING

As noted, the various research methodologies available to organizational scholars may be grounded in fundamentally different epistemological approaches. We therefore begin by considering how methodologies may differ in terms of their underlying scientific reasoning. “Scientific reasoning” involves how we arrive at and produce knowledge, and takes one of two primary forms. The first, “deduction,” draws on established principles from the existing literature, and then subsequently applies syllogistic argumentation to derive testable conclusions that might then extend knowledge (Sætre & Van de Ven, 2021). Alternatively, “induction” refers to scientific reasoning that draws on empirical experience and related data to then move toward theories that clarify constructs, relationships, and processes (Eisenhardt, Graebner, & Sonenshein, 2016). While research methods indeed often orient toward either deduction or induction, methods rarely conform exclusively to the precepts of a single scientific reasoning approach (Eisenhardt, 1989). For instance, many qualitative methods, such as grounded theory, comparative case studies, and ethnography, orient toward induction, whereas many quantitative methods, like field or lab experiments, meta-analyses, and surveys, orient toward deduction. Yet, just as we are likely to observe variation between methods in their orientation toward scientific reasoning, so too are we likely to observe variation within these methods (Kaplan, 2015). As an example, case study research is often thought to be rooted in induction; however, even the most ardent advocates for

purely inductive reasoning within case studies recognize that “it is impossible to achieve this ideal of a clean theoretical slate” (Eisenhardt, 1989: 536).

Classifying a research method as primarily inductive or primarily deductive can offer a useful point of departure for considering how it might be combined with other methods. Such combinations can require not only blending different forms of data, but also integrating methods that may or may not vary in their approach to scientific reasoning. On the bright side, when this challenge is successfully navigated, “new avenues for knowledge creation emerge, thus increasing the potential theoretical contribution of a study” (Tunarosa & Glynn, 2017: 228). Next, we explore how AMJ authors are currently approaching multimethod work.

HOW DO AMJ AUTHORS MIX METHODS? EVIDENCE OF FIVE “ARCHETYPES”

To capture the state of the science when it comes to multimethod research, we reviewed all 238 articles published in AMJ between 2020 and the present, focusing on multimethod papers. Our objective was to categorize these papers into distinct archetypes, aiming to gain insight into the types of multimethod research that appear in this journal. We summarize these findings in Table 1. As part of our review, we observed that not even one article was categorized under the AMJ keyword “Multimethod” (i.e., Multimethod < Research Design < Research Methods), and that only a small number of authors specified why they adopted a multimethod approach—a point we will address in more detail below. Of the articles we reviewed, 93 (39%) contained multiple studies, and 60 (25%) utilized more than one research method. Of the multimethod 60 papers, 17 (28%) dealt with “micro” (psychological) organizational behavior topics, 14 (23%) addressed “macro” (socio-economic) organizational behavior topics, and 29 (48%) were “meso” articles that integrated micro and macro perspectives (Rousseau & House, 1994).

Based on our review of these studies, we identified five “archetypes” of multimethod research that are currently being produced by AMJ authors. By far the most prevalent archetype is *methodological triangulation for hypothesis testing*, which was employed by 45 articles (75% of multimethod papers). Studies in this archetype used methodological triangulation to offset the limitations of individual methodologies and boost both the internal and external validity of their findings (Campbell & Fiske, 1959; McGrath, 1981). They typically implemented

TABLE 1
Multimethod Design Archetypes in AMJ Articles (2020–Present)

Archetype	Form of scientific reasoning	Combination of methods	Representative studies
Methodological triangulation for hypothesis testing • 45/60 studies (75%)	Deductive	Complementary deductive methods to counterbalance weaknesses of individual methods and boost internal and external validity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kuwabara, Cao, Cho, and Ingram (2023) • Martin and Harrison (2022) • Tewfik (2022) • Wong, Cheng, Lam, and Bamberger (2023)
Methodological triangulation for theory development • 2/60 studies (3%)	Inductive	Complementary inductive methods to develop a comprehensive understanding of phenomena	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neeley and Reiche (2022) • Schifeling and Soderstrom (2022)
Test and explore • 5/60 studies (8%)	Combination of deductive (primary) and inductive (secondary)	Deductive methods to test theory, followed by inductive methods to explore and deepen understanding of findings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brennecke (2020) • Dyer, Kryscynski, Law, and Morris (2021) • Mell, DeChurch, Leenders, and Contractor (2020) • Sutton, Devine, Lamont, and Holmes (2021)
Explore and test • 5/60 studies (8%)	Combination of inductive (primary) and deductive (secondary)	Inductive methods to develop theory, followed by deductive methods to test it	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gabriel, Volpone, MacGowan, Butts, and Moran (2020) • Rodell, Sabey, and Rogers (2020) • Ter Wal, Criscuolo, and Salter (2023) • Wellman, Applegate, Harlow, and Johnston (2020)
Full research cycle • 3/60 (5%)	Combination of inductive and deductive	Iterating between inductive and deductive methods to fully explore phenomenon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lee Cunningham, Sunday, and Ashford (2023) • Li and Vermeulen (2021) • Ody-Brasier and Vermeulen (2020)

different measures and samples, enabling constructive replication of their theoretical models (Lykken, 1968). Most studies in the methodological triangulation for hypothesis testing archetype combined two or more deductive methods—most commonly, surveys and experiments. For example, Tewfik (2022) employed multisource, time-lagged survey data, video data from physician–patient interactions, and two online experiments. Similar to other studies in this archetype, Tewfik utilized various studies to investigate different aspects of her theoretical model, with one study examining the entire model.

We also found two studies (3% of all multimethod papers) that used multiple inductive methods to generate a more comprehensive explanation of a phenomenon (Patton, 1999). We refer to this approach to mixing methods as *methodological triangulation for theory development* archetype.

Although inductive methods are often associated with qualitative research (Kaplan, 2015), Neeley and Reiche (2022) utilized qualitative analyses of interviews to investigate the research phenomenon and subsequently employed quantitative analysis of company archival data to further explore boundary conditions. Similarly, Schifeling and Soderstrom (2022) used qualitative comparative analysis to examine the relationship between their study variables and followed up with qualitative interviews to investigate mechanisms.

The next two archetypes we identified were *test and explore* and *explore and test*. Articles in these archetypes employed deductive and inductive methods in a complementary manner (Patton, 1999). Test-and-explore papers used deductive methods to test an initial set of predictions pertaining to their research topic, followed by an

inductive method (usually, qualitative) to gain a deeper understanding. For instance, Brennecke (2020) utilized a large-scale survey for formal hypothesis testing through quantitative analyses, while qualitative interviews offered further insights into the underlying mechanisms.

In contrast, articles in the explore-and-test archetype leveraged inductive methods to generate testable hypotheses, followed by deductive studies for testing. For example, Gabriel and colleagues (2020) conducted an inductive qualitative analysis of interviews to formulate hypotheses and subsequently tested the hypotheses in a deductive experience sampling study. While these two archetypes offer fascinating ways to investigate research phenomena, only five articles (8% of multimethod papers) utilized a “test and explore” approach, and likewise we found only five (8% of multimethod papers) “explore and test” articles. Consequently, the integration of inductive and deductive methods appears to be relatively rare, in spite of the significant number of studies employing either method independently.

The final multimethod archetype we observed was a *full research cycle* approach (three papers, 5% of multimethod papers). Articles in this archetype began with a naturally occurring phenomenon and alternated between inductive and deductive methodologies to better understand the phenomenon. This strategy enabled researchers to establish the phenomenon’s strength, universality, and conceptual foundations (Chatman & Flynn, 2005; Cialdini, 1995). For instance, Lee Cunningham et al. (2023) used a full research cycle approach to understand the role of image risk in leader emergence. The authors initially conducted a deductive survey to test the role of general image risk in the emergence process. Next, they used an inductive qualitative survey to delineate three specific categories of anticipated image risk. Finally, the authors developed a measure of the three forms of anticipated risk and then used the measure in two additional deductive studies (a survey and experiment) to assess the implications of each form of anticipated risk for leader emergence. It’s worth noting that, in our review, we came across a few other papers that asserted they used a full research cycle approach, but did not meet our criteria for inclusion in the archetype because they did not alternate between induction and deduction.

The results of our review indicate that the state of the science for multimethod research in AMJ is heavily skewed toward studies that use methodological triangulation for hypothesis testing. We note

that, although this archetype allows researchers to enhance their confidence in the internal and external validity of their findings, it is less likely than other archetypes to deliver some of the other potential benefits of mixed-methods work.

COMMON PITFALLS IN MULTIMETHOD SUBMISSIONS

In the prior section, we reviewed recent multimethod research that was ultimately successful in meeting AMJ’s publication standards. However, in our work as editors, we have also observed that multimethod submissions can fall victim to some common pitfalls that reduce their likelihood of ever reaching those standards. We highlight the most prevalent of these pitfalls below in hopes of helping authors avoid them.

Pitfall #1: Poor Justification for Mixing Methods

The first common mistake we have noticed authors make is failing to provide an adequate discussion of how mixing methods enables new theoretical advances or provides a more complete or nuanced understanding of an important organizational phenomenon. As noted, many authors simply never explain why they chose to use multiple methodologies. In other cases, authors contend that mixing methods in and of itself is the leading contribution of their manuscript. Unfortunately, this kind of methodologically focused justification is unlikely to move AMJ reviewers, given the journal’s emphasis on theoretical contribution.

Pitfall #2: Poor “Methodological Fit”

Multimethod papers also suffer when one or more of their included studies are inappropriate or unnecessary given the state of the literature on their focal topic. Edmondson and McManus (2007) referred to the alignment between a research methodology and the state of the relevant theory as “methodological fit.” In general, inductive methods are most appropriate when the existing theory is “nascent” or “intermediate” in that it offers few or tentative explanations for the focal phenomenon and the relationships between relevant constructs. In contrast, deductive methods are best suited for “intermediate” or “mature” theories, with better-developed constructs and models of relationships between those constructs that have received considerable empirical support. Poor methodological fit results when researchers employ inductive methods to an area

with mature theory, or deductive methods to a topic for which the existing theory is nascent. When methodological fit is poor, researchers are unlikely to reap the benefits of a multimethod approach. Multimethod work can suffer when, for instance, it “reinvents the wheel” by using inductive methods to explore an aspect of the focal topic that is already well understood, or when it goes on “fishing expeditions” by employing a deductive methodology in an area where insufficient theory exists to develop strong *a priori* predictions about the relationship between constructs (Edmondson & McManus, 2007).

Pitfall #3: Poor Theoretical Complementarity between Studies

The final common pitfall we have observed in multimethod submissions is a lack of theoretical complementarity between the included studies. As Bryman (2007: 8) noted, “the key issue is whether, in a mixed-methods project, the end product is more than the sum of the individual qualitative and quantitative parts.” When theoretical complementarity is poor, the answer to this question is likely to be “No.” We have observed two primary ways that multimethod papers suffer from a lack of complementarity. The first is when they present multiple studies that use different methodologies to do more or less the exact same thing. For instance, a paper may employ an experiment, a survey, and an experience sampling method study that all test the same hypotheses. These sorts of designs do offer some benefits—specifically, the opportunity to replicate findings across different research methodologies and populations. However, in these cases, the value add of the additional methods and studies may seem incremental rather than substantial and important.

The second way papers can fall short of the needed theoretical complementarity is when they do not adequately integrate across the various research methodologies and approaches to scientific reasoning they employ. Tunarosa and Glynn (2017: 224) referred to “integration” as “bridging across different intellectual paradigms to combine empirical insights into a coherent and plausible explanation.” When integration is absent, readers may be left wondering how the insights or findings from the individual studies reported in an article align with or complement one another. In some papers, authors may offer primarily independent interpretations of the findings from each study/method without doing enough to explain how their results work together to bring

about a more complete understanding of their research topic. In other studies, the authors may select methods with such different epistemological approaches that their findings seem to be pulling readers in different directions rather than converging on an integrative understanding of the phenomenon of interest. In either case, the resulting manuscripts can fail to fully capitalize on the potential of a multimethod approach.

ENHANCING THE BOLDNESS AND RIGOR OF MULTIMETHOD RESEARCH: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AUTHORS

We conclude by providing a few tips for increasing the boldness and rigor of multimethod research projects. In offering these suggestions, we are very much standing on the shoulders of giants, and we encourage interested readers to consult the excellent prior guidance in this area (e.g., Edmondson & McManus, 2007; Greene, Caracelli, & Graham, 1989; Molina-Azorin, 2012; Tunarosa & Glynn, 2017). Our goal here is to share some additional recommendations that authors might find useful. In particular, we discuss the importance of employing less prominent multimethod archetypes, better justifying the use of multiple methods, ensuring theoretical and operational alignment, and making thoughtful use of appendices and online supplements.

Employ Less Common Multimethod Archetypes

As we have noted, the vast majority (75%) of the multimethod research published in AMJ since 2020 falls into a single archetype: methodological triangulation for hypothesis testing. We speculate that, in addition to the ability to triangulate across methods, the growing interest in research transparency (DeCelles, Howard-Grenville, & Tihanyi, 2021; Miguel et al., 2014) and reliability (Munafò et al., 2017) may be contributing to the prevalence of this form of multimethod work. For example, authors often choose to follow up a field-based survey study with a pre-registered experiment. Such a design not only provides additional support for causal inferences and safeguards against alternative explanations, it also enhances confidence in the replicability of research findings. Thus, the benefits of methodological triangulation for hypothesis testing are clear.

And yet, in our view, triangulation on its own is unlikely to provide a groundbreaking theoretical contribution. Instead, such a contribution is more likely to arise through the use of some of the less

common multimethod archetypes: specifically, explore and test, test and explore, and the full research cycle. These archetypes combine inductive and deductive methods, enabling authors to both generate new ideas and categories and provide an initial assessment of the appropriateness of these ideas and categories for understanding the phenomenon of interest. So, this review highlights an opportunity for authors to increase the theoretical boldness of their submissions by considering the test and explore, explore and test, and full research cycle archetypes when they are designing research projects. It is likely the case that these archetypes are less common because only a small number of researchers possess the necessary level of expertise in both inductive and deductive methods. However, this difficulty can be overcome by partnering with coauthors with different methodological backgrounds, or by prioritizing the research method with which one is most at ease (Patton, 1999).

Explain Why and How Methods Are Being Combined

Early in multimethod papers, it is important for authors to clearly state their rationale for mixing methods, as well as how their chosen combination of methodologies enables them to significantly advance theory pertaining to their research topic. Although this advice seems intuitive, our review suggests it is not always implemented in practice. However, we did notice some papers that offered compelling justifications for a multimethod approach. One such article is Rodell and colleagues' (2020) study of the relationship between volunteering and corporate reputation. The authors articulated how the nascent state of the literature justified an initial inductive study of customer perceptions of volunteering, and how they then integrated their findings with relevant theory to develop and test a more nuanced theoretical model via a deductive study. Supporting our earlier point about research team composition, it is noteworthy that the authorship team featured a blend of primarily inductive and primarily deductive scholars.

Authors whose work aligns with one of the two methodological triangulation archetypes would also benefit from explaining how the triangulation of results provides a better and/or more complete explanation of their focal phenomenon. A good example of this kind of explanation is offered by Martin and Harrison (2022) in their investigation of the relationship between social class transitions and voice. The

authors stated that they first conducted a field study to test their theorizing using a method with high external validity, then an archival analysis to explore their theorized individual-level mechanism (self-efficacy) in a larger sample with greater separation of measurement, and finally a pre-registered experiment to provide additional evidence for causality.

Ensure Theoretical and Operational Alignment

We further encourage authors of multimethod papers to ensure theoretical and operational alignment across the manuscript. Theoretical alignment can be established by ensuring that the different studies are well grounded in a theoretical framework and are appropriate given the state of the existing literature. For scholars conducting multimethod work with a "meso" orientation, it is also important to clearly explain how the theorized lower-level mechanisms connect with higher-level ones. The recent editorial on bridging micro–macro research provides additional useful suggestions for developing such aggregation logic (Cowen, Rink, Cuypers, Grégoire, & Weller, 2022).

Another helpful tool for enhancing theoretical alignment is "storyboarding" multimethod research projects *before* collecting, compiling, and analyzing data (Knight, 2020). This involves thinking through the full arc of a project's desired contribution ahead of time and identifying the multimethod archetype and specific combination of studies that will best accomplish that arc. While storyboarding, authors might find it helpful to incorporate three key elements of a narrative plot: the rising action, climax, and falling action (Author Learning Center, 2023; Prodigy, 2022). The "rising action" of a narrative advances the central conflict. This can be accomplished in multimethod work by presenting initial studies (or theorizing) that begin to unpack elements of the central theoretical tension the paper is addressing. The rising action culminates in the "climax," the moment of maximum interest, where the central conflict is resolved. In many multimethod papers, the climax takes the form of the most significant study—one that offers a finding that fundamentally changes our understanding of the focal phenomenon or that integrates findings from prior studies into a single unifying model. Finally, the "falling action" of a plot resolves all outstanding subplots and makes the full implications of the climax apparent. In multimethod research, this can be accomplished through additional studies (or targeted post-hoc analyses; Hollenbeck & Wright, 2017) that constructively

replicate or extend the key finding, or explore its mechanisms or boundary conditions. For example, in their exploration of alternative formal hierarchical structures, Wellman et al. (2020) reviewed the literature to identify the most relevant possible structures and develop a “simple theory” of hierarchy’s effects on individual team members (rising action), created a computational model that examined the team-level performance implications of the structures they identified (climax), and then conducted an additional field study to establish the generalizability of a key modeling finding (falling action).

Furthermore, authors are encouraged to pay attention to operational alignment in multimethod research. This type of alignment can be achieved by ensuring that the measures used across studies are sufficiently connected with one another. In some cases, this can involve clarifying for readers why the different variable operationalizations adequately reflect the same, overarching, theoretical constructs of interest (i.e., represent the same predictor, process, or outcome construct). Such clarification can increase readers’ ability to make meaningful comparisons across studies. Operational alignment can be further increased by developing and presenting clear construct definitions early on in the paper, and, when possible, standardizing protocols for coding, scale use, and labeling. It is also critical to use consistent statistical representations across the studies, even if they are based on different data sources.

Use Appendices and Online Supplements Thoughtfully

Given the complexity involved in multimethod research, it can be challenging to present findings concisely. Thus, our final piece of guidance for authors is to be very thoughtful about what information to report. It is important to provide readers with enough detail that they can understand what was done, but not so much that they get distracted from the central story arc. One way to manage this trade-off is to move elements of a study that are less critical to the central narrative to an appendix or online supplement. These elements may include initial validation studies of measures, pretests of manipulations, robustness checks, and/or alternative mechanisms tested and ruled out. Streamlining multimethod papers through the thoughtful use of appendices and online supplements can help readers focus on the most important aspects of the work, while giving them access to supporting details if they are interested.

CONCLUSION

Despite the challenges it poses, multimethod research has tremendous potential to produce studies that advance AMJ’s mission. We hope that this editorial will assist authors in conceiving and executing multimethod research projects that capitalize on all the vibrant promise of the approach, creating new knowledge that significantly advances theory and contributes to organizational thriving. Or, put differently, we hope authors will feel empowered to add more methodological diversity to their work in a way that is likely to result in a “better”—that is, a higher-quality and more impactful—final product.

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