

# A Mixed Methods Analysis of Methodological Orientation in National and Regional Criminology and Criminal Justice Journals

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The current study uses a mixed methods design to examine the so-called methodological divide in criminology and criminal justice and the extent to which mixed methods are being employed within the discipline. The authors content analyzed research articles from two national and four regional journals to determine the type and frequency of various methodologies. A sample of journal article authors was then surveyed to gain a better understanding of the methodological and publication pressures experienced by researchers. Findings indicate that although quantitative methods still dominate, the use of mixed methods appears to be increasing. Differences between national and regional journals are also discussed.

## Introduction

Criminology and criminal justice (CCJ) has witnessed a surge of interest and research on various aspects of scholarship produced in the field. Perhaps one of the most enduring topics of this interest is the discussion within CCJ regarding methodology and the so-called quantitative/qualitative divide (Higgins, 2009; Tewksbury, 2009). Although some scholars have dismissed this ongoing debate as fruitless (Pratt, 2010), analyses of research design and methodological orientation of CCJ articles consistently reveal that the overwhelming majority of scholarship published in top-tier CCJ journals is quantitative research (Kleck, Tark, & Bellows, 2006; Tewksbury, Dabney, & Copes, 2010). Despite these findings, Brent and Kraska (2010) argue that the field has witnessed a recent interest in bridging this methodological divide through the increasing use of mixed methods research designs.

The current study aims to broaden the scope of the dialogue regarding quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods research in two important ways. First, we analyze articles published in various “types” of CCJ journals. An

examination of the extant literature on methodological orientation in CCJ reveals that, in nearly every study on the topic, the focus is on research articles published in the five to ten most prestigious or top-tier publication outlets (see Buckler, 2008). This focus on top-tier journals is understandable. Although not without criticism (Poole & Regoli, 1981; Walters, 2006), journal prestige and impact factors consistently identify a handful of CCJ journals as the most "important" within the field (Fabianic, 1980; Regoli, Poole, & Miracle, 1982; Shichor, O'Brien, & Decker, 1981; Sorensen, 2009; Sorensen, Snell, & Rodriguez, 2006; Stack, 1987; Williams, McShance, & Wagoner, 1995). Nevertheless, analyzing the methodologies of articles published in top-tier, national journals might be missing a body of scholarship published elsewhere. As CCJ develops more doctoral programs and the field matures, more research is produced. The limited space in top-tier journals and increasing competition to have one's articles published in those journals has, arguably, resulted in a growing number of newer, regional journals and an increasing number of scholars who publish in these outlets.

The possibility also exists that different types of scholarship are being published in regional journals that are not among the top tier. This potential becomes particularly important when considering the so-called quantitative/qualitative divide and the predominance of quantitative studies within the top-tier journals. Given that research shows that the vast majority of articles published in those journals are quantitative in nature, it is possible that reviewers for these journals may knowingly or unknowingly perpetuate a quantitative bias, leading authors of qualitative or mixed methods studies to seek alternative outlets. By expanding the focus to both top-tier journals and regional journals, we argue that we are capturing a more complete cross-section of the scholarship being produced in the CCJ field.

### Literature Review

Triangulation (the use of multiple methods to study one research question) is a staple in social science textbooks today (Clark & Creswell, 2008). The term originated in land surveying, map making, navigation, and military practice (Bachman & Schutt, 2012; Berg, 2007) to refer to multiple lines of sight. It first appeared in the social science literature in the 1950s to describe multiple data collection strategies designed to measure a single concept or construct (Campbell, 1956; Campbell & Fiske, 1959). At least one classic example of triangulation appeared long before the 1950s—LaPiere's 1934 classic restaurant study of non convergence of attitude and behavior. Other classic examples of triangulation followed: Reiss's (1968) study of police and citizen transactions, Sales's (1973) study of authority, and Van Maanen's (1975) analysis of police socialization. Thus, the triangulation model is not new. What is new, however, is the extent to which the model has matured and grown. Today, it is referred to as *mixed methods*.

A mixed methods study involves the collection or analysis of both quantitative and/or qualitative data in a single study in which the data are collected concurrently or sequentially, are given a priority, and involve the integration of the data at one or more stages in the process of research. (Clark & Creswell, 2008, p. 165)

Scholars have debated whether mixed methods research is a separate design (Clark & Creswell, 2008; DiCristina, 1997; Worrall, 2000); however, that discussion is not the focus of our review. What we know is that today we find mixed methods handbooks, textbooks, dedicated journals, and international conferences scattered across disciplines as diverse as education, medicine, nursing, and sociology. How much has CCJ embraced mixed methods?

In 2005, Tewksbury, DeMichele, and Miller reviewed the content and author characteristics of all articles ( $n=725$ ) published in *Criminology* (CRIM), *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, *Journal of Criminal Justice* (JCJ), *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* (JRCD), and *Justice Quarterly* (JQ) from 1998 through 2002. For purposes of this review, we only focus on the findings of methodological content.

Tewksbury, DeMichele, and Miller (2005) found nearly three-quarters (73.1%) of all articles appearing in the top five CCJ journals during this time period used quantitative methodologies, 6% employed qualitative methodologies, and 19.6% used other methodologies (e.g. evaluation, theoretical, meta-analysis, legal, and historical). Despite the evolution in mixed methods research, only 1.4% of all articles in the top five CCJ journals employed mixed methods of data collection and analysis. In their conclusion, the researchers called our attention to the 1997 ACJS presidential address by Dr Donna Hale wherein Dr Hale called criminal justice an eclectic field and "whose diversity makes it vital to both higher education and society" (Hale 1998 as cited in Tewksbury et al., 2005, p. 277). Tewksbury et al. (2005) challenged us to implement diverse methodological approaches to better define, explain, understand, and intervene in the issues of crime, deviance, and law.

Kleck et al. (2006) content analyzed all empirical articles ( $n=305$ ) appearing in seven leading journals (*Crime & Delinquency* [CD], CRIM, JCJ, *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology*, *Journal of Quantitative Criminology*, JRCD, and JQ) in 2001 and 2002 with regard to the research methods used, general research designs, data-gathering methods, and statistical analysis employed. The researchers found "... survey research was by far the dominant mode of acquiring criminological information, that cross-sectional non-experimental designs still predominated, and that multivariate statistical methods were the norm" (p. 147). The researchers did not mention mixed methods.

Buckler (2008) content analyzed 860 empirical articles published in five top-tier (CD, CRIM, JCJ, JRCD, and JQ) and three regional journals (*American Journal of Criminal Justice* [AJCJ], *Southwest Journal of Criminal Justice* [SWJCJ], and *Western Criminology Review* [WCR]) from 2003 through 2007 and presented summary findings that explored the quantitative/qualitative divide in

CJC. Although he said he content analyzed the type of research method (quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods, p. 387), he makes no mention of mixed methods in his analysis. Of the 860 articles analyzed, 96.2% ( $n = 827$ ) reported data in quantitative form. Only in two of the top-tier journals (CRIM and CD) did the use of qualitative methods exceed 10%. However, in all three regional journals, the use of qualitative methods exceeded 10% suggesting either that editors and reviewers of regional journals are more open to qualitative methods or that the researchers who use these methods are more likely to send manuscripts to regional journals (p. 390).

Buckler also conducted telephone interviews with 10 past and present editors of CCJ journals. According to the interviews "... very few qualitatively-oriented manuscripts are submitted for review" (p. 391). Editors of top-tier journals estimated that they received between 1 and 15% of qualitatively oriented manuscripts for review. Estimates from editors of regional journals were higher, 10–50%. Thus, according to the editors interviewed, any appearance of quantitative bias in the decision to publish articles is more likely reflective of a scarcity of manuscripts using qualitative designs being submitted.

Brent and Kraska (2010) published a theoretical essay and argued that the use of mixed methods is both legitimate and beneficial. They argue that recent developments, including a growing number of publications that mix qualitative and quantitative methods and the inclusion in doctoral programs of both required and elective qualitative-based courses, "appear to be slowly eroding the ideology of methodological exclusivism, potentially signaling a shift toward methodological tolerance, diversity, and pluralism" (p. 418). Although recognizing the challenges of mixed methods designs, Brent and Kraska (2010) contend that there are numerous advantages, including increasing validity and generalizability and increased depth of understanding, among others. They conclude that the rigorous production of scholarship using mixed methods is now part of CCJ and the discipline is rich with opportunities that can use the mixed methods approach.

The goal of the present study, then, is twofold: First, we aim to contribute to the dialogue regarding quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods research by expanding the focus to include journals identified as regional journals in order to capture a more complete cross-section of the scholarship being produced in the field of CCJ. Second, we attempt to gain a more complete understanding of the quantitative/qualitative/mixed methods issue by employing a mixed methods approach that includes content analysis of journal articles in addition to a survey of a sample of the authors who wrote the articles to expound on the rationale for employing their particular research designs.

## Methods

### Journal Selection

Six journals were selected for inclusion in the current analysis: CRIM, JQ, AJCJ, *Journal of Crime & Justice* (JC&J), SWJCJ, and WCR. CRIM and JQ were selected to represent top-tier, high prestige, national journals. Both journals are commonly recognized as having a high impact factor and being among the most prestigious journals in CCJ (Sorensen, 2009; Sorensen et al., 2006; Williams et al., 1995). Both are also affiliated with the two major professional academies in CCJ. CRIM is affiliated with the American Society of Criminology and JQ is affiliated with the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences. AJCJ, JC&J, SWJCJ, and WCR were selected to represent regional journals. Each of these journals is also affiliated with one of the regional associations, which are connected to the larger national associations. AJCJ is the official journal of the Southern Criminal Justice Association; JC&J is the official journal of the Midwestern Criminal Justice Association; SWJCJ is affiliated with the Southwestern Association of Criminal Justice; and WCR is the official journal of the Western Society of Criminology.

Each of these journals was selected not only because of their association with academic organizations, but also because of their scope and focus. All included journals have a broad scope and publish articles on variety of CCJ topics. We intentionally excluded journals that focus on specialty areas within the field (e.g. *Homicide Studies*; *Prison Journal*; *Police Quarterly*; *Justice System Journal*; and *Women and Criminal Justice*) or which focus on a particular type of topic (*Theoretical Criminology*; and *Journal of Experimental Criminology*). While the selection of which journals to include and exclude may provoke debate in any study examining methodologies employed, we believe that the journals included in this analysis represent the top-tier and regional journals in CCJ. Table 1 presents Sorensen et al.'s (2006) prestige ranking and mean rating and Sorensen's (2009) adjusted citation and impact factor for the top-tier and regional journals included in the analysis.

**Table 1** Journal rankings

Journal	Sorensen (2009) adjusted citation count rank	Sorensen (2009) impact factor rank	Sorensen et al. (2006) prestige rank	Sorensen et al. (2006) mean rating <sup>a</sup>
CRIM	1	1	1	9.13
JQ	2	3	2	8.71
AJCJ	34	24	37	6.51
JC&J	35	16	36	6.53
SWJCJ	n/a	n/a	66	5.01
WCR	41	35	52	6.02

<sup>a</sup>The mean rating for all 69 journals included in the Sorensen et al. (2006) study was 6.55.

Included in this analysis are all empirical research articles published in the six journals in 2008, 2009, and 2010 ( $n = 314$ ). Reviews, commentaries, editorial introductions, and purely theoretical articles were excluded from this analysis. As part of a larger study, a coding protocol was developed that recorded each article's journal, volume, issue, year published, start and end pages, methodology, and research design. For methodology, articles were coded as either "quantitative only," "qualitative only," or "mixed methods." We also recorded the number of data collection methods and coded each method into one of 18 categories.<sup>1</sup> For the final analysis, these 18 categories were collapsed into seven categories of data collection methods: surveys (face-to-face, mail, Internet, and telephone), official statistics (UCR, NCVS, Census, and other agency), meta-analysis, content analysis, experimental (classic, quasi, and pre), open-ended interviews (face-to-face, mail, Internet, and telephone), and other qualitative methods (focus groups, observation, and case studies).

## Findings

### Article Analysis

In an effort to examine the nature of empirical articles in CCJ and the methodologies commonly employed by researchers, we present descriptive statistics comparing across journal types (national journals vs. regional journals) and across research designs (quantitative-only vs. qualitative only vs. mixed methods). The results of this analysis are presented below.

#### *Characteristics of articles by journal type*

Table 2 presents the results from the content analysis of research articles published in the six journals for a three-year period (2008–2010). We find several notable differences in the characteristics of articles published in the two national journals compared to those published in the four regional journals. For example, articles in the national journals were, on average, longer than those in regional journals. Articles in CRIM and JQ had a mean page length of 30.2 pages compared to a mean page length of 18.7 pages for articles in AJCJ, JC&J, SWJCJ, and WCR. Articles in the two national journals were more likely to employ quantitative-only research designs (88.7%) compared to articles in regional journals (80.5%), whereas regional journal articles were more likely to use qualitative-only designs (7.8% vs. 3.2%) and mixed method designs (11.7% vs. 8.1%) compared to the two national journals.

1. The following 18 methods of data collection categories were used: 1 = face-to-face survey/questionnaire; 2 = mailed survey/questionnaire; 3 = Internet survey/questionnaire; 4 = telephone survey/questionnaire; 5 = macro official statistics (e.g. UCR, NCVS, and Census); 6 = micro archival/agency data; 7 = meta-analysis; 8 = pure/classic experiment; 9 = quasi and pre-experiment; 10 = content analysis; 11 = face-to-face open-ended interview; 12 = mailed open-ended interview; 13 = Internet open-ended interview; 14 = phone open-ended interview; 15 = focus groups; 16 = observation; 17 = simulation; and 18 = case study.

With regard to the methods of data collection employed, a greater percentage of articles in CRIM and JQ used official statistics or experimental methods of data collection, whereas AJCJ, JC&J, SWJCJ, and WCR articles were more likely than the national journal articles to collect data through surveys, content analysis, and open-ended surveys. Specifically, over two-thirds (67.2%) of the articles in the two national journals used official statistics in their analyses compared to less than half (49.2%) of the articles in the four regional journals. While 8.1% of national journal articles used experimental methods of data collection, less than 1% of articles in regional journals employed experimental methods of data collection. Content analysis was used to collect data in 17.2% of articles in regional journals compared to 5.9% of articles in national journals.

### *Characteristics of articles by research design*

Table 2 also shows that among all 314 articles analyzed, 85.4% reported the results of research that utilized only quantitative designs, 5.1% reported findings from qualitative-only designs, and 9.6% reported findings from mixed methods

**Table 2** Characteristics of articles by journal type

	All journals	National journals <sup>a</sup>	Regional journals <sup>b</sup>
Total # of articles	314	186	128
# of pages (mean)	25.5	30.2	18.7
<i>Research design (%)</i>			
Quantitative only	85.4	88.7	80.5
Qualitative only	5.1	3.2	7.8
Mixed methods	9.6	8.1	11.7
<i>Data collection methods (%)</i>			
# of Data collection methods (mean)	1.9	2.0	1.7
Surveys <sup>c</sup>	49.4	46.2	53.9
Official statistics <sup>d</sup>	59.9	67.2	49.2
Meta-analysis	0.6	1.1	—
Experimental <sup>e</sup>	5.1	8.1	0.8
Content analysis	10.5	5.9	17.2
Open-ended <sup>f</sup>	9.6	8.1	11.7
Other qualitative <sup>g</sup>	2.9	2.2	3.9

<sup>a</sup>CRIM & JQ.

<sup>b</sup>AJCJ, JC&J, SWJCJ, & WCR.

<sup>c</sup>Includes face-to-face, mail, Internet, and telephone surveys.

<sup>d</sup>Includes UCR, NCVS, Census, and agency data.

<sup>e</sup>Includes classic, quasi, and pre-experimental designs.

<sup>f</sup>Includes face-to-face, mail, Internet, and telephone.

<sup>g</sup>Includes focus groups, observation, and case studies.

**Table 3** Characteristics of articles by methodology

	All designs	Quantitative	Qualitative	Mixed methods
Total # of articles	314	268	16	30
# of pages (mean)	25.5	25.9	20.2	25.2
<i>Data collection methods</i>				
# of data collection methods (mean)	1.9	1.8	1.1	2.7
Surveys <sup>a</sup>	49.4	52.2	—	50.0
Official statistics <sup>b</sup>	59.9	61.6	—	73.3
Meta-analysis	0.6	0.7	—	—
Experimental <sup>c</sup>	5.1	5.6	—	3.3
Content analysis	10.5	7.9	—	40.0
Open-ended <sup>d</sup>	9.6	—	62.5	66.7
Other qualitative <sup>e</sup>	2.9	—	37.5	10.0

<sup>a</sup>Includes face-to-face, mail, Internet, and telephone surveys.

<sup>b</sup>Includes UCR, NCVS, Census, and agency data.

<sup>c</sup>Includes classic, quasi, and pre-experimental designs.

<sup>d</sup>Includes face-to-face, mail, Internet, and telephone.

<sup>e</sup>Includes focus groups, observation, and case studies.

designs. Table 3 shows that qualitative articles were shorter than other types of articles, averaging 20.2 pages compared to an average of 25 pages for quantitative articles and 25.2 pages for mixed methods articles. Not surprisingly, mixed methods articles used more methods for collecting data than quantitative or qualitative articles. Specifically, mixed methods studies employed an average of 2.7 methods of data collection. The most common data collection methods used in mixed methods articles were official statistics (73.3%), open-ended interviews (66.7%), surveys (50.0%), and content analysis (40.0%).

Articles with quantitative research designs only often employed more than one quantitative data collection method, averaging 1.8 methods per study. The use of official statistics was most common, with 61.6% of quantitative research designs only articles using some type of official data, while 52.2% of quantitative research designs only employed survey data. Qualitative articles tended to report findings from only one method of data collection. The most common qualitative methods used in qualitative research designs only was either open-ended interview (62.5%) or other qualitative methods (focus groups, observation, and case study) (37.5%).

## Survey of Authors

We used an Internet survey and queried a sample of authors about the methodology and data collection techniques they employ in their research. We asked how comfortable they are conducting quantitative, qualitative, and mixed



**Table 4** Characteristics of articles authored by survey respondents

Total # of articles	61
# of pages (mean)	23.9
National journal (%)	49.2
Regional journal (%)	50.8
<i>Research design (%)</i>	
Quantitative only	70.5
Qualitative only	6.6
Mixed methods	23.0
<i>Data collection methods</i>	
# of data collection methods (mean)	2.0
Surveys <sup>a</sup> (%)	49.2
Official statistics <sup>b</sup> (%)	57.4
Meta-analysis (%)	1.6
Experimental <sup>c</sup> (%)	4.9
Content analysis (%)	19.6
Open-ended <sup>d</sup> (%)	18.0
Other qualitative <sup>e</sup> (%)	6.6

<sup>a</sup>Includes face-to-face, mail, Internet, and telephone surveys.

<sup>b</sup>Includes UCR, NCVS, Census, and agency data.

<sup>c</sup>Includes classic, quasi, and pre-experimental designs.

<sup>d</sup>Includes face-to-face, mail, Internet, and telephone.

<sup>e</sup>Includes focus groups, observation, and case studies.

methods research: whether they felt pressure to publish in top-tier journals and to employ a specific methodology (quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods) and, if so, to describe the pressure; whether they perceive there is pressure at universities other than their own to publish in top-tier journals; what methodologies they associate with top-tier and regional journals; and what influences the selection of journals in which they publish.

As part of a larger study, we created a stratified sample based on university and college Carnegie type<sup>2</sup> and methodology (quantitative, qualitative, and mixed method). Fifty-one articles were randomly selected that were quantitative and RU. Nineteen were randomly selected that were quantitative and non-RU. Forty-six were randomly selected that were mixed method and qualitative. Five articles were deleted because author affiliation was an agency and our

2. The Carnegie Classification has been the leading framework for recognizing and describing institutional diversity in US higher education for the past four decades. The classifications were updated in 2010 producing 32 classification categories. See <http://www.carnegiefoundation.org/>. For our purposes, we collapsed the 32 categories into 13: RU/VH: research universities/very high research activity; RU/H: research universities/high research activity; DRU: doctoral/research universities; Master's L: master's colleges and universities (larger programs); Master's M: master's colleges and universities (medium programs); Master's S: master's colleges and universities (smaller programs); Bac/A&S: baccalaureate colleges—arts & sciences; Bac/diverse: baccalaureate colleges—diverse fields; Bac/Assoc: baccalaureate/associate's colleges; Assoc/Pub-R-S: associate's—public rural—serving small; Assoc/Pub-R-L: associate's—public rural—serving large; not a university; and foreign university.

interest focused on academic pressure. Another two articles were deleted because the sole author was the same as one on a third article, and one recipient had an email address that blocked Internet surveys. One hundred eight Internet surveys were emailed and 61 (56.5%) responded.

We linked the 61 survey respondents to the article from the content analysis that they authored to establish the types of articles and characteristics of the authors of those articles. Table 4 presents the characteristics of the articles and their authors written by the survey respondents. Our oversampling of authors of regional journal articles resulted in slightly more than half of the respondents (50.8%) having authored an article published in one of the four regional journals. Similarly, oversampling resulted in nearly a quarter (23.0%) of the survey respondents having authored mixed methods articles, whereas less than 10% of the original articles that we analyzed employed mixed methods designs.

**Table 5** Survey descriptive statistics

	All respondents
Primary research (%)	
Quantitative	63.3
Qualitative	1.7
Mixed methods	28.3
Quant & MM	5.0
Quant, Qual, & MM	1.7
Majority research published (%)	
Quantitative	80.3
Qualitative	4.9
Mixed methods	14.8
Comfort conducting quantitative research (%)	90.2
Comfort conducting qualitative research (%)	63.9
Comfort conducting mixed methods research (%)	82.0
Top tier pressure (%)	70.0
Top tier pressure elsewhere (%)	97.3
Quantitative pressure (%)	32.8
Qualitative pressure (%)	5.0
Mixed methods pressure (%)	11.5
Associate top tier w/quantitative (%)	83.3
Associate top tier w/qualitative (%)	5.0
Associate top tier w/mixed methods (%)	21.7
Associate regional w/quantitative (%)	64.4
Associate regional w/qualitative (%)	35.6
Associate regional w/mixed methods (%)	42.4
	<i>n</i> = 61

Several survey questions asked the respondents about their research focus and comfort level with different research methodologies. Overall, 63.3% of respondents indicated that when they think about conducting a research project, they primarily think in terms of quantitative research, while 28.3% reported primarily thinking about mixed methods research. However, 80.3% of respondents reported that the majority of their published research was quantitative, 4.9% responded that the majority was qualitative, and 14.8% indicated that most of their published research used mixed methods. Although the majority of respondents reported feeling comfortable conducting all types of research, a higher percentage indicated comfort conducting quantitative studies (90.2%) compared to qualitative (63.9%) or mixed methods (82.0%) research (Table 5).

Authors were also asked whether they felt pressure in their academic unit to publish in "top tier" journals, such as *CRIM* and *JQ*, and whether they felt pressure to conduct specific kinds of research. While 70% of respondents reported feeling pressure to publish in "top tier" journals, nearly all respondents (97.3%) agreed that there was pressure to publish in "top tier" journals at universities other than their own. Only about one-third of respondents (32.8%) indicated feeling pressured to conduct quantitative research, while very few reported feeling pressure to publish qualitative (5.0%) or mixed methods (11.5%) research.

Finally, authors were asked if they associate "top tier" journals, such as *CRIM* and *JQ*, or regional journals, such as *AJCJ*, *JC&J*, *SWJCJ* and *WCR*, with different research designs. More than four out of five respondents associated "top tier" journals with quantitative research, whereas less than two-thirds associated regional journals with quantitative research. Respondents were also more likely to associate regional journals with qualitative and mixed methods research.

In an effort to gain a greater understanding of the pressures academics feel to publish in certain outlets or to conduct specific types of research, and the factors that influence the selection of journals for their research, we asked survey respondents to describe those pressures and factors in an open-ended format. The following sections present the analysis of the data obtained from the open-ended responses. Responses were coded using manifest content analysis (the literal or surface meaning of the message being conveyed, not its underlying or implied meaning; Merton, 1957) in an effort to determine if common themes emerged.

### Pressure to Publish in Top-Tier Journals

Authors who agreed or strongly agreed (70%) that they felt pressure to publish in *CRIM* and *JQ* were asked to describe that pressure. Four themes emerged from their responses: career advancement; department culture; quality and value; and self-imposed pressure.

### *Career advancement*

Authors said that pressure to publish in top-tier journals impacted their tenure, promotion, evaluation, and merit raises. Some wrote the pressure was explicit; others said it was implicit. We find an example of explicit pressure when one author writes, *"Tenure and promotion require that at [sic] about 50% of publications be in a top tier journal."* Another author described implicit pressure saying, *"While top journal publication is not required for tenure and promotion here, there is some pressure for our department to demonstrate excellence in scholarship from some tenured faculty and from other colleagues and administrators outside of the college."* Thus, we find some evidence that pressure to publish in top-tier journals is linked directly or indirectly to career advancement.

### *Departmental culture*

Aside from one's career advancement, authors also said that there is pressure within the department to publish in top-tier journals. We find evidence of this when one author writes, *"... we are encouraged to published [sic] in top tier journals because such publications advance our national reputation"* and another wrote, *"... enhancing the prestige of the department is a collective goal of the faculty."* These examples show that, independent of one's career advancement, department culture can exert pressure for an individual to "fit in" and publish in top-tier journals in order to heighten the overall reputation of the author's respective institution.

### *Quality and value*

Another theme that emerged was related to the quality and value of publications in top-tier journals. Instead of relating the pressure to a tangible outcome, such as tenure or promotion or the pressure to adhere to culture or expectations in a department, these respondents discussed the way publication in top-tier journals is viewed as the genesis of the pressure. The clearest expression of quality and value can be viewed in the following quote: *"These journal are valued considerably more than other journals. Research in other journals is sometimes viewed as unworthy or not making a contribution to the state of knowledge."* This and similar comments clearly make the point that only research published in top-tier journals is scientifically valid. Research published in something other than top-tier journals makes little to no contribution to the field. Linking this finding to the data presented in Table 2 is further evidence of what some believe is the only valid scientific perspective—quantitative analysis.

### *Self-imposed pressure*

The final theme that emerged from those who agreed or strongly agreed that they felt pressure to publish in CRIM and JQ was self-imposed pressure. One of our respondents expressed it this way writing,

It is primarily self-imposed pressure. I want to publish in top-tier journals as a matter of professional pride. I also publish in lower-tier journals, too, though and that is just fine with me and with my institution. I think variety is important.

Thus, while most respondents described external pressure to publish in top-tier journals, some said it was an individual choice.

### Perceived Pressure to Publish in Top-Tier Journals at Other Universities

Of the 97.3% of respondents who believed that there is pressure at other universities to publish in top-tier journals, 65.5% provided explanations. While several respondents indicated a somewhat vague perception of this pressure in the field (e.g. "I hear about it from other scholars."), three primary themes emerged from the responses. Perhaps not surprisingly, there was considerable overlap in the nature of these themes when compared to those that were generated in the analysis of the data related to respondents' own pressure to publish in top-tier outlets.

#### *Program-related*

A common theme within these responses involved perceived pressure to publish in top-tier journals as emanating from PhD granting programs. In other words, being at doctoral granting programs is associated with pressure to publish in high-ranking journals. One of our respondents expressed it this way:

Colleagues from some of the doctoral programs describe their programs as being obsessed with the IMPACT ranking of journals—and based on this IMPACT measure—describe a mentality of no publication is worthwhile unless it appears in these impact journals.

Another respondent opined, *"Most competitive PhD-granting programs emphasize, either explicitly or implicitly, publishing in top-tier outlets."* Thus, we find some evidence that there is a perception among some individuals that if you are going to join a PhD granting program, you will be expected to publish in top-tier journals.

#### *Universal/discipline-based pressure*

In contrast to those who specifically mentioned PhD programs as the source of top-tier journal emphasis, others viewed the focus on publication in high-ranking journals as something that was (nearly) universal throughout the CCJ discipline. Two responses suggest this: *"Our discipline seems to think [that] if it is not in top tier [it is] not worth reading,"* and *"I get the impression that many universities feel the same way about top tier journals as mine—that publishing anywhere else is not worth the time and effort, and that research*

*published in them must be of lesser quality.*" Therefore, the perception some individuals have to explain the pressure to publish in top-tier journals at universities other than their own is, in some cases, a function of their belief in the existence of universal publishing standards that awards the highest publishing excellence to top-tier journals.

#### *Tenure and promotion*

Similar to respondents' descriptions of pressure they felt to publish in top-tier journals, respondents also believed this pressure existed at universities other than their own. One respondent voiced it this way: *"Some tenure and promotion language at other universities specifically states that 'x' number of publications must be in top-tier journals in order for assistant professors to be granted tenure and promotion."* Another respondent remarked learning about the pressure to publish in top-tier journals at other universities from colleagues at conferences.

#### Pressure to Conduct Quantitative Research

Nearly a third (32.8%) of the survey respondents indicated that they felt pressure to conduct quantitative research. Sixty percent of these respondents provided explanations about the pressure they feel. The responses emphasized two overlapping themes: *Value* and *Publication Potential*. With regard to value, respondents noted that when compared to qualitative research, quantitative research was looked at more favorably and considered superior. Responses such as, *"Quantitative research is considered superior over qualitative research in my department"* and *"Quantitative research is respectable, qualitative is often seen as not"* reveal the value and pressure respondents face to publish quantitative research.

Respondents were equally direct on the publication potential of quantitative research over qualitative research in top-tier journals. *"In general, quantitative articles are easier to publish. Given the pressure to publish, I feel pressured to publish quantitative."* Another respondent acknowledged the statistical publication potential of quantitative research over qualitative research in top-tier journals: *"Copes['] recent article in JCJE says it all. When qualitative studies appear in the top journals only about 5% of the time, the emphasis has to be on quantitative research."* Clearly, we see a relationship between feeling pressure to publish quantitative research and the perception that quantitative research is more valued and holds more publication potential in top-tier journals.

#### Pressure to Conduct Qualitative or Mixed Methods Research

Only 5% of the survey respondents indicated that they felt pressure to publish qualitative research while 11.5% felt pressure to publish mixed methods

research. Only a few of these respondents provided descriptions of this pressure. Those who did describe pressure to publish qualitative or mixed methods research indicated that the pressure was internal or self-imposed. One respondent illustrated this point by writing, *"As one of 3 qualitatively oriented faculty members, I feel it is my responsibility to demonstrate departmental competence through publication to attract graduate students."* Another described it this way: *"The pressure is more internal than external."* Thus, we find some evidence that pressure to publish qualitative or mixed methods research is internal, whereas, as we discussed earlier, the source to publish quantitative research is external.

### Factors that Influence Journal Selection

Almost 90% of our respondents described factors that influenced the selection of journals in which they have published. Three general themes emerged: "fit" of a study's topic with a journal's focus, the prestige or ranking of the journal, or practical considerations.

#### *Topic/journal fit*

Many of the respondents reported focusing on the alignment between the topical focus of the manuscript and the journal's focus. This determination also appears to be based on the topics previously published in the journals. One respondent verbalized it this way:

I am mostly concerned with how well I think my manuscript will fit at a particular journal. It is not about the methodology so much as the subject matter—does the journal publish articles that address the topic that my manuscript addresses?

Another respondent described it this way: *"... how well [the] article matches with the types of articles that have been previously published."* Thus, we find that respondents did not report being concerned with research methodology or journal prestige, but more concerned with the alignment between the topical focus of the manuscript and the journal's focus.

#### *Journal prestige*

Another group of authors explicitly reported that the most important factor in determining where to submit their articles related to the prestige of the journal. One respondent explained the importance of journal prestige by saying, *"... exposure to the widest audience of criminologists; More respect is gained from publishing in top tier journals than low tier journals. [There is a] better review process at top tier journals."* Some authors reported being influenced by metrics of journal quality. For example, *"I focus on the impact factor score*

*and whether the journal is in the social science citation index.*" Thus, while some researchers focus on the alignment between the topical focus of the manuscript and the journal's focus, others tell us that the prestige of the journal is the most important factor in determining where to submit their articles for publication.

### *Practical considerations*

We learned from another group of respondents that their primary consideration is on the likelihood that the manuscript would be published or on the review process. Respondent excerpts that demonstrated the importance of practical considerations include *"Primarily: where I'll get a fair review."* and *"Practical contingencies also enter into play such as my feelings about the editor and what I have heard with respect to the turnaround time and likelihood of getting a revise and resubmit."* Thus, besides focusing on the alignment between the topical focus of the manuscript and the journal's focus, and journal prestige, we also learn that scholars consider practical considerations, such as the likelihood that the manuscript would be published and the review process when selecting publication outlets.

## Discussion

The current study utilized a mixed methods approach to evaluate whether CCJ has demonstrated a willingness to entertain and embrace mixed methods research and provide a sense of the so-called "methodological divide." First, we analyzed articles published in top-tier, national journals and regional journals over three recent years to gain a better understanding of the types of methodologies employed in published research. In addition, we surveyed a sample of the authors of the articles included in the first part of the study to gauge their perceptions regarding different types of methodologies and journals.

The analysis of journal articles presented here clearly indicates that quantitative-only research designs predominate in articles published in CCJ journals; however, nearly 10% of all articles analyzed employed mixed methods designs and another 5% used only qualitative methods. Whether a rate of one out of 10 articles using mixed methods represents the discipline's willingness to entertain and embrace mixed methods is debatable, but it does represent a considerable increase in the prevalence of mixed methods articles compared to the 1.4% of articles using mixed methods reported in the analysis of top-tier journals from 1998–2002 by Tewksbury et al. (2005). Perhaps more interesting is our finding that a greater percentage of articles published in regional journals compared to national journals employ either mixed methods (11.7% compared to 8.1%) or qualitative (7.8% compared to 3.2%) methods.



The findings from the survey of authors may help to better understand the results of the analysis of journal articles. It appears that, among authors, regional journals are viewed as more appropriate outlets for mixed methods and qualitative research. Although the reasons for this association are likely more complex than what can be discerned in the present study, the open-ended responses we received may help to shed some light on this finding.

The majority of authors surveyed (70.0%) reported feeling pressure to publish in top-tier journals, while nearly all (97.3%) agreed that there was pressure to do so at other universities. These authors discussed this pressure largely in terms of departmental, program, and discipline culture and by referring to the importance of doing so for tenure, promotion, or career advancement. In general, authors indicated that publishing in top-tier journals is valued more and either beneficial or necessary for career advancement. Interestingly, authors who reported feeling pressure to conduct quantitative research indicated that quantitative research was both more valued/superior and more likely to be published. These findings appear to support the conclusion that, at least among some CCJ authors, quantitative research is what is needed in order to get published in the top-tier, national journals, which is closely tied to respect, value, and career advancement. Therefore, perceptions of quality related to top-tier, national journals, coupled with perceptions of quality and value associated with quantitative research may lead many authors within the discipline to make the connection between top-tier, national journals and quantitative research.

It appears that, within CCJ, the methodological divide between quantitative and qualitative research is both perceived and real. CCJ journals are more likely to publish quantitative research; however, our findings, coupled with prior research, indicate several possible causes of this situation. Buckler's (2008) interviews with CCJ journal editors indicate that a quantitative bias among reviewers may be partially to blame. One of the editors interviewed by Buckler commented, "I think reviewers look down on, or don't hold the qualitative articles in as positive regard as they would a quantitative article," leading Buckler to surmise, "... that the mechanism through which bias in the field impacts authors who submit qualitative work is that reviewers look to apply their cognitive understanding of quantitative research onto qualitative work that is reviewed" (p. 392). This type of response from reviewers to qualitative research likely perpetuates the (seemingly correct) perception among authors, demonstrated in the current study, that qualitative research is less valued and less likely to be published, particularly in top-tier, national journals. This perception, in turn, likely results in reluctance among authors conducting qualitative or mixed methods research to submit their work for review in these journals. In fact, the editors of top-tier journals who were interviewed by Buckler (2008) estimated that only 1–15% of manuscripts submitted for review employed qualitative methodologies. Interestingly, and consistent with the greater likelihood of qualitative and mixed methods articles appearing in regional journals reported here, editors of regional journals estimated that

between 10 and 50% of the manuscripts submitted to those journals are qualitative in nature.

### Conclusion

Following the analysis of methodological orientation in the CCJ literature, Tewksbury et al. (2005) expressed the position, "There is little, if any, reason to believe that there will be any disruption of the status quo in methodological preference in CCJ research, but the existing biases do discourage the use of multiple methods" (p. 277). Our findings lead us to a bit more optimism. Although journal articles are still overwhelmingly quantitative in nature, it appears that mixed methods and qualitative research have become more common than in the past. The change is most pronounced with mixed methods research. Thus, it appears that the methodological exclusivism with CCJ reported in the past may be showing signs of cracks, with the use of multiple methods, while still a marked minority, increasing in popularity.

Our findings also lead us to conclude that any disruption in the status quo of quantitative preference may emerge from the regional journals. As these journals become better established, increase circulation, and gain in prestige and impact, their influence throughout the discipline will likely also increase. Should they maintain their status as a favored outlet for mixed methods and qualitative research, perhaps those methods will likewise enjoy improvements in prestige and value. For this development to occur, however, departments, universities, and the CCJ discipline must recognize that quality scholarship can be found outside of the handful of national journals identified as top tier.

Nevertheless, other developments are also needed for greater methodological diversity to be realized. Doctoral programs will need to place a greater emphasis on mixed and qualitative methods. Reviewers will need to recognize the value of different approaches. Authors will need to become more willing to submit qualitative and mixed methods research to all types of journals, including those in the top tier. Furthermore, all of these changes need not occur simultaneously. It is likely that significant movement in one area will, over time, have a cascading effect.

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