

Mixed Methods for Policy Research and Program Evaluation


By Patricia E. Burch, Carolyn J. Heinrich



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Mixed Methods for Policy Research and Program Evaluation by Patricia Burch and Carolyn J. Heinrich equips students, researchers, and policymakers in the social sciences with the tools they need for applying mixed methods in policy research and program evaluation, from design, through data collection, and dissemination. Emphasizing the "how-to" the set of conceptual and active tasks carried out by mixed methods researchers the book is illustrated with rich case studies from the authors' own research projects in education and public policy. These examples help readers identify and explain policy and program impacts and better understand the "why" and "how" of observed effects. Throughout the book, the authors describe challenges that both beginners and advanced scholars are likely to encounter when doing mixed methods research and recommend practical tools available to address them.

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Editorial Review

Review

Drawing on their extensive experience in large scale project management, Patricia Burch and Carolyn Heinrich clearly articulate an agenda for program and policy evaluation that is designed to ensure actionable evidence of the effectiveness of a program and its implementation is generated for all stakeholders. The examples they provide, while not minimizing the challenges of employing a mixed methods approach, will convince readers of the practicality and value of iteratively integrating both qualitative and quantitative approaches throughout the entire evaluation process, from initial design through data integration and analysis to dissemination of research findings. We can all learn from their experiences, so generously shared. -- Patricia Bazeley

In a time of scarce resources for social programs, wise policy requires making tough choices. To do this well, policymakers need reliable information on what works, why some approaches are more successful than others, and what can be done to improve effectiveness. This book is a vital primer on how to do that. It attacks the mistaken view that quantitative and qualitative research are alternatives, rather than essential complements that, when combined in a mix of research methods, can best provide guidance to policymakers and practitioners.--Judith M. Gueron

This book is just what is needed as we move into a new phase of evidence informed policy and practice. It advocates an integrated and coherent approach to policy research and program evaluation while recognizing the realities and complexities of both policy and research. It will be immensely helpful to those engaged in mixed methods research across a variety of policy fields.--Geoff Whitty

This rich and sophisticated book provides a wealth of insights and practical guidelines that will enhance the work of both novice and experienced researchers. Burch and Heinrich show the way to making mixed methods research more relevant and more rigorous. --Thomas Hatch

In this book, Burch and Heinrich have successfully explained how a mixed methods approach can be applied to policy analysis and evaluation. I highly recommend it for scholars applying mixed methods to the study of public policy issues. This book should be required reading for all public policy students and researchers.-- Elizabeth A. Corley

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The gulf between qualitative and quantitative researchers is an old problem. With this useful and important new book, Burch and Heinrich help to bridge the divide, highlighting the need for a more complementary and integrated approach that can help us learn not just whether programs "work," but how and why they do.
--Douglas N. Harris

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This is a very useful book for researchers and evaluators contemplating or already using mixed methods in policy research and evaluation, as well as for those teaching applied evaluation courses.

--Diane Hirshberg

The book's biggest strength is its emphasis on the practicalities of integrating different methods throughout the life cycle of a research project. For example, all the chapters end with discussion questions, which force the reader to think through and better understand how the material presented might apply to their own work. The book is also illustrated with rich case studies (mostly from the education and social welfare arenas) to aid understanding.--James Canton, social and behavioural research, Department for Transport

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About the Author

Patricia Burch (PhD, Stanford University) is an associate professor of education at the University of Southern California and studies the drivers and manifestations of private involvement (for profit and not for profit) in K-12 education and the implications for equity and quality in public schools. Over the past decade, Dr. Burch has conducted major studies and evaluations of K-12 education reform such as class size reduction, systemic district instructional reform in large urban school districts, teacher professional development reforms, school choice, and school-linked services. She is the author of several books, including *Hidden Markets: The New Education Privatization* (Routledge, 2009), and *Equal Scrutiny: Privatization and Accountability in Digital Education*, with Annalee Good (Harvard Education Press, 2014).

Carolyn J. Heinrich (PhD, University of Chicago) is the Sid Richardson professor of public affairs at the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs, affiliated professor of economics, and the director of the Center for Health and Social Policy at the University of Texas at Austin. Dr. Heinrich's research focuses on social welfare policy, workforce development, education, econometric methods for social program evaluation, and public management and performance management. She engages in research and evaluation work to improve education and training outcomes in programs for disadvantaged youth; labor market intermediaries and labor market outcomes for low-skilled and disadvantaged workers; healthcare systems transformation and their implications for the disadvantaged; and poverty reduction programs. She regularly consults and collaborates with government agencies and nongovernmental organizations on program evaluations and in improving program and policy design and program effectiveness. In 2004, Heinrich received the David N. Kershaw

Award for distinguished contributions to the field of public policy analysis and management by a person under age 40, and in 2010, she was elected to the National Academy of Public Administration. Prior to her appointment at the University of Texas in July 2011, she was the director of the La Follette School of Public Affairs at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

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