

INTRODUCTION: Toward a new research philosophy for addressing social justice issues: Critical dialectical pluralism 1.0

ANTHONY J ONWUEGBUZIE AND REBECCA K FRELS*

Department of Educational Leadership and Counseling, Sam Houston State University, Huntsville, TX, USA; *Lamar University, Beaumont, TX, USA

ABSTRACT: *We introduce a new mixed research paradigm: Critical dialectical pluralism. We describe critical dialectical pluralism with respect to three axiomatic components (i.e., ontological, epistemological, and methodological foundations) and seven issues (i.e., nature of knowledge, knowledge accumulation, goodness or quality criteria, values, ethics, inquirer posture, and training). Critical dialectical pluralists are committed to research that promotes and sustains an egalitarian society; aims to promote both universalistic theoretical knowledge and local practical knowledge; and promotes culturally progressive research. Several exemplars of critical dialectical pluralist research are presented demonstrating that critical dialectical pluralism has the potential to promote social justice more than does any other paradigm.*

KEYWORDS: critical dialectical pluralism, social justice, research philosophy, mixed research, mixed methods research

Some critics of mixed methods research – more aptly called mixed research – have questioned the role of philosophy in mixed research. For example, Yanchar and Williams (2006) declared that mixed researchers have ‘little regard for challenging issues pertaining to the nature of reality, knowledge, the good, and so on’ (p. 3). Similarly, Lincoln (2009) stated that ‘some mixed-methods proponents, arguing as they do that philosophies, paradigms, and metaphysics do not matter’ (p. 7). However, these critics did not substantiate these claims. In fact, in our experience, such statements could not be further from the truth. As surmised by Mertens (2012), ‘The mixed methods community is awash in discussions about philosophical frameworks or paradigms that provide guidance for mixed methods approaches’ (p. 255). Similarly, Creswell (2010) declared ‘The philosophical issues surrounding mixed methods have received and continue to receive considerable discussion in the field of mixed methods’ (p. 54). Moreover, using mixed research techniques, Frels, Onwuegbuzie, Leech, and Collins (2013) documented that philosophical stance plays an important role in shaping the pedagogical strategies used by select teachers of mixed research courses.

Evidence of the importance of philosophical assumptions and stances in the field of mixed research can be obtained from the second (i.e., latest) edition of the *Handbook of Mixed Methods Research* (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010), wherein

six (i.e., Biesta, 2010; Greene & Hall, 2010; Hesse-Biber, 2010; Johnson & Gray, 2010; Maxwell & Mittapalli, 2010; Mertens, Bledsoe, Sullivan, & Wilson, 2010) of the 31 seminal chapters (19.4%) are devoted to philosophical issues in mixed research. Further evidence of the important role that philosophical assumptions and stances play among mixed researchers can be gleaned from the number of research philosophies that have emerged within the mixed research community. Indeed, currently, at least 13 philosophical stances associated with mixed research have been identified, with the most popularized stance being pragmatism in its various forms (e.g., pragmatism-of-the-middle, pragmatism-of-the-right, pragmatism-of-the-left; cf. Biesta, 2010; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Maxcy, 2003; Putnam, 2002; Rescher, 2000; Rorty, 1991), followed by the transformative-emancipatory stance (Mertens, 2003, 2007, 2010) and dialectic stances in some form (e.g., dialectical pluralism; Johnson, 2012). Table 1 presents these 13 philosophical stances.

Teddlie and Tashakkori (2010) presented a typology in which they sub-divided mixed research-based philosophical beliefs into one of the following six conceptual stances: A paradigmatic, substantive theory, complementary strengths, dialectic, and alternative paradigm. Although each of these conceptual stances is represented by some mixed researchers, it appears that the dialectic and alternative paradigm stances are the most

TABLE 1: MIXED RESEARCH PHILOSOPHICAL ASSUMPTIONS AND STANCES

Research philosophy	Stance
Pragmatism-of-the-middle philosophy	Offers a practical and outcome-oriented method of inquiry that is based on action and leads, iteratively, to further action and the elimination of doubt; paradigms routinely are mixed (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007)
Pragmatism-of-the-right	Holding a moderately strong form of realism, and a weak form of pluralism (Putnam, 2002; Rescher, 2000)
Pragmatism-of-the-left	Antirealism and strong pluralism (Maxcy, 2003; Rorty, 1991)
Critical realist	Mix of critical theory and a multilevel, discursive social scientific realism (Bhaskar, 1997, 1998; Christ, 2011, 2013; Goff, 2004; Houston, 2001; Lipscomb, 2011; Maxwell, 2004; Maxwell & Mittapalli, 2010; McEvoy & Richards, 2003, 2006)
Pragmatic-critical realism	Combination of pragmatism and critical realism (Johnson & Duberly, 2000)
Anti-conflationist	Methodology should not be conflated with technical aspects of method because the same method can be used by researchers with different ontological/epistemological stances; adoption of a more principled approach when combining methods – only appropriate to combine methods if a common ontological/epistemological stance can be maintained (Bryman, 1988; Hammersley, 1992; Layder, 1993; Roberts, 2002)
Dialectical stance	Dialogical engagement with paradigm differences that generatively produce new knowledge and insights (Greene, 2007). Use of ‘dialectical pragmatism’ (i.e., examine qualitative and quantitative stances fully and dialectically, and produce a combination solution that works best for the research question) (Teddlie & Johnson, 2009)
Complementary strengths	Paradigms are not necessarily incompatible but are substantively different; thus, methods used for different paradigms should be kept separate to preserve paradigmatic and methodological integrity (Greene, 2007)
Transformative-emancipatory	Emancipatory, participatory, and anti-discriminatory research that focuses directly on the lives, experiences, and perceptions of marginalized persons or groups (Mertens, 2003, 2007, 2010; Mertens et al., 2010)
A-paradigmatic	Paradigms are logically independent and thus can be mixed; but although they are useful for reflection, they do not shape practical research decisions; rather, practical characteristics and issues related to the underlying context and problem drive these decisions (Greene, 2007)
Substantive theory	Paradigms may be embedded or intertwined with substantive theories; yet, substantive issues and conceptual theories drive the mixed research, not paradigms (Greene, 2007)
Communities of practice	Consistent with pragmatist philosophy but accommodates variations and inconsistencies that prevail within mixed research by promoting a diversity of researchers, allowing paradigms to operate at different levels, incorporating group influences on methodological decisions, shifting debates about paradigms to level of practice and research culture, and allowing methods to be chosen based on their practical value for addressing a research problem (Denscombe, 2008)
Dialectical pluralism	Involves taking a pluralist stance ontologically (i.e., multiple kinds of reality [e.g., subjective, objective, intersubjective]) and relies on a dialectical, dialogical, and hermeneutical approach to studying phenomena (Johnson, 2011, 2012)

Adapted from ‘A call for mixed analysis: A philosophical framework for combining qualitative and quantitative’, by Onwuegbuzie, Johnson, et al. (2009), *International Journal of Multiple Research Approaches* (p. 134). Copyright 2009 by eContent Management Pty Ltd.

prevalent in the mixed research community (see, for e.g., Frels et al., 2013). Each of these conceptual stances is summarized in Table 2. Thus, as noted by Onwuegbuzie (2012), ‘it is very difficult to justify any claims that mixed researchers have not paid

(sufficient) attention to the issue of philosophical assumptions and stances underlying mixed research’ (p. 199). Consistent with this assertion, Collins, Onwuegbuzie, and Johnson (2012a) conceptualized the notion of philosophical clarity, which

TABLE 2: TASHAKKORI AND TEDDLIE'S (2010) SIX CONCEPTUAL STANCES ASSOCIATED WITH MIXED RESEARCH

Conceptual stance	Description
A-paradigmatic	Paradigms or conceptual stances are not important to read-world practice
Substantive theory	Theoretical orientations (e.g., critical race theory) are more pertinent to the underlying research study than are philosophical paradigms
Complementary strengths	Mixed research is possible but that the different approaches must be kept as separate as possible so that the strength of each paradigm can come to the fore
Multiple paradigms	A single paradigm is not appropriate for all mixed research designs; rather, different paradigms are relevant for different mixed research designs
Dialectic	Use of multiple paradigms in a single mixed research study yields greater understanding of the underlying phenomenon
Alternative paradigm	Single paradigm (e.g., pragmatism-of-the-middle; transformative emancipator) is used to support the use of mixed research

This table was adapted from Frels et al. (2013). Reprinted with kind permission of Rebecca K. Frels, Anthony J. Onwuegbuzie, Nancy, L. Leech, and Kathleen M. T. Collins.

they defined as a quality criterion that represents the degree to which 'the researcher is aware of and articulates her/his philosophical proclivities in terms of philosophical assumptions and stances in relation to all components, claims, actions, and uses in a mixed research study' (p. 855). Collins et al. (2012a) further stated that philosophical clarity shapes a researcher's choice of paradigm, which, in turn, influences the decisions and actions made by mixed researchers. When a mixed researcher lacks philosophical clarity, then inference quality likely is adversely affected.

DIALECTICAL PLURALISM

Of the 13 aforementioned mixed research-based philosophical stances, the most recent mixed research philosophy is dialectical pluralism. Building on the dialectical approach to mixed methods research advocated by Greene (2007), Johnson (2012) conceptualized dialectical pluralism as involving adopting:

a pluralist stance ontologically (there are many kinds of reality that are important, such as subjective, objective, intersubjective, disciplinary, paradigmatic) and

relies on a dialectical (and dialogical and hermeneutical) approach to learning from difference.

At the level of paradigms, DP [dialectical pluralism] is a metaparadigm because it carefully listens to multiple paradigms and provides a metaparadigmatic standpoint. The idea of DP for research is to: (a) dialectically listen, carefully and thoughtfully, to different paradigms, disciplines, theories, and stakeholder and citizen perspectives; (b) combine important ideas from competing paradigms and values into a new workable whole for each research study or program evaluation; (c) explicitly state and "pack" the approach with stakeholders' and researchers' epistemological and social-political values to guide the research (including the *valued ends* one hopes for and the *valued means* for getting there); (d) conduct the research ethically; (e) facilitate dissemination and use of research findings (locally and more broadly); and (f) continually, formatively evaluate and improve the outcomes of the research-and-use process (e.g., Is the research having the desired societal impact?). In short, DP is a change theory, and it requires listening, understanding, learning, and acting. One can engage DP as both an intellectual process (where one dialogues with ideas, values, concepts, and differences) and a group process (where one, working in a heterogeneous group, strives to produce win-win, or at least complementary, results).

When enacted with traditional differences in the social and behavioral sciences, DP can help provide a meta-ontological perspective, a meta-epistemological perspective, and a meta-ethical perspective that combines or produces an agreeable "package of goals and values" that serves multiple important groups and perspectives. (pp. 752–753)

What is particularly appealing about Johnson's (2012) dialectical pluralism is its inclusive nature. Indeed, in principle, any two or more of the other 12 mixed research-based philosophical stances in Table 1 can be combined or mixed within a single mixed research study. In fact, at least theoretically, adopting a dialectical pluralist stance means that a mixed researcher can combine any two or more

philosophical stances within a given mixed research study, even if one or more philosophical stances represents either the quantitative tradition (e.g., postpositivism) or the qualitative tradition (e.g., social constructionism). For example, in her award-winning mixed research-based dissertation, Kohler (2011) used a fully mixed concurrent equal status design (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2009) to examine: (a) the relationship between the incidents of school violence and the size of all middle schools in the state of Texas ($N = 842$) (quantitative research phase); (b) the perceptions of principals from different-sized middle schools regarding the role that school size plays a role in the number of incidents of school violence (qualitative research phase); and (c) whether their perceptions align with the discipline data, specifically fighting, assaults, and aggravated assaults (mixed research phase). Kohler used a dialectical pluralistic lens (she referred to this lens by its original name of *dialectical pragmatism*; Johnson, 2009; Johnson & Gray, 2010) that combined the following two epistemological perspectives: pragmatism-of-the-middle (cf. Table 1) and social constructionism (which focuses more on social processes and interactions, involving the goal of seeking understanding via recollections and vicarious experiences of individuals; Schwandt, 2000, 2007). As explained by Kohler (2011):

Because school violence represents a social act (i.e., has a social context), the social constructionist research paradigm was deemed appropriate for the present study. (p. 15)

Similarly, Bengé (2012) conducted a mixed research-based dissertation also involving the use of a fully mixed concurrent equal status design that was framed under the dialectical pluralism lens: (a) to replicate and to extend previous research involving the examination of both student success and perceptions concerning the use of cartoon mnemonics in combination with traditional definitions (e.g., Mastropieri & Scruggs, 1998), the use of dictionary definitions (McKeown, 1993), and the use of revised definitions (McKeown, 1993) alone as tools in vocabulary acquisition; and (b) to explore the use of cartoon mnemonics in combination with revised definitions as an instructional technique for introducing individual vocabulary words and their

meanings to fifth-grade students in an attempt to ascertain whether the combination of methods affects student understanding and attitudes toward learning new vocabulary. The dialectical pluralism lens in Bengé's (2012) study involved combining pragmatism-of-the-middle and social constructivism (Guba & Lincoln, 2005).

Other examples of mixed research studies where the researchers declared a dialectical pluralist stance include the series of studies conducted by Frels and her colleagues (e.g., Frels, Onwuegbuzie, Leech, & Collins, 2012; Frels et al., 2013; Onwuegbuzie, Frels, Leech, & Collins, 2011, 2013) examining pedagogical issues pertaining to mixed research courses. For instance, Frels et al. (2013) documented how their dialectical pluralism lens helped them make what meta-inferences (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009), which represent integration of inferences derived from the quantitative and qualitative study components:

Further, we believe that our own conceptual stance of dialectical pluralism (i.e., dialectic) was an ideal lens for "carefully listening to" and interpreting "the values, ideas, and concepts that are considered important [by the mixed research course instructors] ... based on a dialectical listening to different (i.e., two or more) ontologies, epistemologies, methodologies, and stakeholder and local perspectives" (Johnson, McGowan, & Turner, 2011, p. 74) of these instructors. As conceptualized by Johnson et al. (2011), our conceptual stance of dialectical pluralism helped to provide us with a "broader or metaperspective" (p. 74). Simply put, our dialectical pluralist stance helped us to interpret the voice of the participants in our study who represented a diverse set of philosophical assumptions and stances. (pp. 28–29)

The inclusivity of the dialectical pluralism metaparadigm extends even further: specifically, dialectical pluralism is not restricted to mixed research studies, it can operate in mono-method studies as well. For example, Frels (2010) adopted a dialectical pluralist stance in her qualitative dissertation: (a) to explore selected mentors' perceptions and experiences of the dyadic mentoring relationship in school-based mentoring; and (b) to build on the qualitative body of research (Spencer, 2004, 2007) for understanding roles, purposes, approaches, and experiences of the relationship

process with mentees (the dyadic relationship). Frels (2010) provided an extensive description of her philosophical assumptions and stances, including the following excerpt:

The driving research paradigm for my study is what Johnson (2009) recently has labeled as *dialectical pragmatism*, which refers to an epistemology that requires the researcher to incorporate multiple epistemological perspectives. Specifically, in my research, I combined the following three epistemological perspectives: pragmatism, social constructionism, and a two-way interactive transformative-empowerment approach....

Mentees clearly represent underserved and marginalized persons because, by definition, they are considered to be at risk for dropping out of school As such, mentoring is "a relationship wherein the mentor and mentee benefit from one another" (Barton-Arwood, Jolivet, & Massey, 2000, p. 36). Therefore, I utilized a variation of Merten's (2003) transformative-empowerment stance, which I referred to as the *two-way interactive transformative-empowerment stance*, because persons representing both sides of the relationship were at risk –with the mentors being at risk for dropping out of mentoring relationships..., resulting in detrimental outcomes for mentees... (pp. 18, 20–21)

TOWARD A NEW RESEARCH PARADIGM FOR ADDRESSING SOCIAL JUSTICE ISSUES

We believe that one of the most important challenges faced by researchers representing the social, behavioral, and health sciences is how adequately to address social justice issues. Although social justice issues can be and have been addressed within the context of quantitative research (e.g., critical quantitative research [Baez, 2007; Teranishi, 2007]; quantitative criticalism [Stage, 2007]) and qualitative research (e.g., critical theory [Morrow & Brown, 1994]; critical race theory [Delgado & Stefancic, 2012]), we agree with Mertens (2007) that:

Methodologically, mixed methods are preferred for working toward increased social justice because they allow for the qualitative dialogue needed throughout the research cycle, as well as the collection of quantitative data as appropriate. (p. 224)

Although one of the goals of dialectical pluralism is to "give voice" to those with the least power' (Johnson, 2012, p. 753), this goal is just one of

numerous goals associated with this paradigm. Nor, to date, has it been articulated by Johnson (2012) how having a dialectical pluralist stance helps to give voice to those with the least power. Further, although Mertens' (2003, 2007) transformative-empowerment stance – which represents research that is emancipatory, participatory, and anti-discriminatory, and which focuses directly on the lives and experiences of underserved and marginalized persons or groups such as women; ethnic/racial/cultural minorities; certain religious groups, individuals with disabilities/exceptionalities; and members of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transsexual communities – clearly articulates how to capture these voices, these voices are filtered through the voice of the researcher(s). That is, Mertens' (2003, 2007, 2010) transformative-empowerment stance privileges researchers over participants by giving them ultimate power over all decisions made at every stage of the research process – especially with respect to the elements of the voice that are included and excluded, as well as the veracity with which each participant's story is told.

In other words, although we embrace the transformative-empowerment stance paradigm as a lens through which social justice issues can be addressed – and we have used this lens ourselves in some of our work (e.g., Frels, 2010; Onwuegbuzie, Frels, et al., 2013), we believe that there are at least some occasions when using this paradigm does not go far enough in terms of giving voice to people who have been traditionally excluded, namely, those who represent disenfranchised and the least advantaged groups in society and who have the least power. Specifically, although adopting a transformative-empowerment stance is extremely useful for giving voice to the powerless, transformative researchers – as do all other types of researchers – still exercise control over the research decisions made at all four stages of the research process: The research conceptualization stage (e.g., research goal, research objective), the research planning stage (i.e., sampling design, research design), the research implementation stage (e.g., the type and amount of data collected, the type of analyses conducted, how the data are interpreted, how the data are legitimated), and the research utilization stage (i.e., how and to whom the findings

are disseminated). For example, with regard to the sampling design, transformative researchers make decisions about the sample size(s) and sampling scheme(s) pertaining to all the quantitative and qualitative phases of the mixed research study, with the assumption being that the researchers are the experts – similar to the way that physicians are assumed to be experts under the medical model, wherein physicians assume an authoritarian position in relation to their patients and the patients assume a passive role. Yet, just as patients often are more knowledgeable about their own bodies than are physicians, so too are research participants often more knowledgeable about their own study setting than are the researchers – especially when researchers are taking an etic perspective.

Thus, what is needed is a mixed research paradigm that assumes a communitarian view of power that is represented by reciprocity between the researcher(s) and the participant(s) – a relationship not of domination, but of intimacy and vulnerability. We believe that a new paradigm – which we call critical dialectical pluralism – represents such a research paradigm. Thus, the purpose of the remainder of this article is to introduce critical dialectical pluralism.

CRITICAL DIALECTICAL PLURALISM

Critical dialectical pluralism, which builds on Johnson's (2012) dialectical pluralism, is based on the assumption that social injustices prevail in every society. Moreover, using the framework of Onwuegbuzie, Collins, and Frels (2013), wherein all research studies (i.e., qualitative, quantitative, *and* mixed research studies) representing the social, behavioral, and health fields were classified as representing research conducted at one or more of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) four levels of his ecological systems model, which they coined as *micro-research studies* (i.e., Level 1: Research wherein one or more persons or groups are studied within his/her/their immediate environment[s]), *meso-research studies* (i.e., Level 2: Research wherein one or more persons or groups are studied within other systems in which the he/she/they spends time), *exo-research studies* (i.e., Level 3: Research wherein one or more persons or groups are studied within systems by

which the he/she/they might be influenced but of which he/she/they is not directly a member), and *macro-research studies* (i.e., Level 4: Research wherein one or more persons or groups are studied within the larger cultural world or society surrounding him/her/them), critical dialectical pluralism has at its roots the assumption that, to some degree, social injustices prevail at the micro, meso, exo, and macro levels of society.

As such, the goal of critical dialectical pluralists is to conduct research that advances and sustains an egalitarian society; seeks to promote both universalistic theoretical knowledge and local practical knowledge; and promotes culturally progressive research. Unlike dialectical pluralism, rather than embrace numerous paradigms or worldviews, critical dialectical pluralism privileges those paradigms or worldviews that promote and sustain an egalitarian society, such as the following: (a) transformative-emancipatory (Mertens, 2003, 2007, 2010), critical theory (Morrow & Brown, 1994), critical race theory (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012), critical ethnography (Thomas, 1993), critical quantitative research (Baez, 2007; Stage, 2007; Teranishi, 2007), and feminist theory (Hesse-Biber, 2010). In particular, critical dialectical pluralist researchers are not interested in research that promotes any kind of cultural deficit model wherein negative educational, social, behavioral, and health outcomes are attributed to characteristics that are rooted in the study participants' cultures and communities via negative stereotypes and assumptions. That is, critical dialectical pluralist researchers essentially avoid conducting research under the assumption that participants are to blame for their plight. Rather, critical dialectical pluralist researchers continually attempt to identify the root causes of oppression by focusing on the prevailing power structures and relationships between the oppressors and the oppressed. To this end, critical dialectical pluralist researchers attempt to refrain from conducting one-shot studies that examine the plight of systematically marginalized people; rather, whenever possible, they focus on conducting a series of research studies on a given phenomenon, with the set of studies representing all four Bronfenbrenner-based ecological systems (i.e., micro, meso, exo,

and macro levels; Onwuegbuzie, Collins, et al., 2013). Even more importantly, when conducting research, critical dialectical pluralist researchers acknowledge the social and cultural capital present among under-represented, marginalized, and oppressed populations, such as their resiliency, leading to a focus on resiliency research.

Further, critical dialectical pluralist researchers promote research that focuses directly on the lives, experiences, and perceptions of underserved persons or groups and promote research examining the relationship between societal structures (e.g., economic, political, geo-political) and ideological mental models that impede a person or group from identifying, problematizing, confronting, and addressing unjust socio-cultural systems. Although researchers who adopt some of the existing research philosophies (e.g., transformative-emancipatory, critical theory, critical race theory, critical ethnography, critical quantitative research, feminist theory) also have some or most of these same goals, critical dialectical pluralist researchers go much further than do these other researchers by empowering the participants to make research-based decisions at the various stages of the research process (i.e., research conceptualization, research planning, research implementation, research utilization). For example, rather than the researcher presenting the findings (e.g., via conferences, journal articles, book chapters, books, technical reports), the critical dialectical pluralist researcher adopts a research-facilitator role that empowers the participants to assume the role of participant-researchers, who, subsequently, either perform or present the findings themselves (e.g., using Web 2.0 applications such as YouTube) or co-perform/co-present the findings with the research-facilitator(s). This is what most distinguishes critical dialectical pluralist research from the other transformative-based research wherein the researcher(s) presents the findings in a format of his/her/their choice, and even more importantly, often do not even share the findings with the study participants.

In essence, then, critical dialectical pluralism changes the role of mixed researcher to mixed research-facilitator, changes the role of participant to participant-researcher, and changes the

research from representing an etic perspective or even an emic perspective to an emtic perspective (i.e., 'representing the place where emic and etic viewpoints are maximally interactive'; Onwuegbuzie, 2012, p. 205). Further, in critical dialectical pluralist research, the research-facilitator/participant-researcher relationship is not only reciprocal but power is shifted toward the participant-researcher(s). More specifically, the participant-researcher model makes the research-facilitator responsible not to an etic institution but to those being studied/stakeholders (e.g., underserved, under-researched, under-represented). The critical dialectical pluralist researcher believes that dialog is a central element that liberates rather than imprisons us in confrontational or dysfunctional relationships such that powerlessness is problematized and power is deconstructed and engaged through solidarity as a mixed research-facilitator/researcher team. In addition, conceptions of good are shared by the research participants, and the research-facilitators collaborate in bringing these definitions to their fore.

Importantly, participants have a co-equal say in what phenomenon should be studied; how research should be conducted to study this phenomenon; which methods should be used; which findings are valid, acceptable, and meaningful; how the findings are to be disseminated and utilized; and how the consequences of such decisions and actions are to be assessed. Indeed, the participant(s) is responsible for deciding what text remains in the final report, and, as noted previously, the participant(s) performs the findings alone or in partnership with the research-facilitator. In contrast, the research-facilitator assumes the role of democratic facilitator and consciousness raiser, or *cultural broker* between the participant-researcher(s) and entities that have power over them. These research-facilitators often use: (a) a dialogic style of facilitating; (b) intimate highly personal participant-researcher relationships; and (c) a community review of the media used for dissemination (e.g., video, manuscript). Further, critical dialectical pluralist researchers emphasize nonmaleficence (i.e., the concept of not causing harm to others); beneficence (i.e., actions that are undertaken for the

benefit of others; beneficent actions can be undertaken to help remove or to prevent harm or to improve the situation of others); justice (i.e., decisions that are made, based on universal principles and rules, in an impartial and warranted manner in order to ensure fair and equitable treatment of all people); and fidelity (i.e., the act of loyalty, faithfulness, and fulfilling commitment). Simply put, critical dialectical pluralist researchers do not only conduct culturally responsive research, but also they conduct the type of research that Onwuegbuzie and Frels (in press) refer to as *culturally progressive*, wherein researchers continually should strive toward: (a) *cultural awareness of beliefs* (i.e., by being cognizant of their own biases and personal values and those of their participants and how these elements might influence any decisions/co-decisions made at every stage of the [mixed] research process); (b) *cultural knowledge* (i.e., acquiring knowledge of the cultural context surrounding the participant[s] or group) and the role that the cultural context plays in the co-construction of knowledge; and (c) *cultural skills* (i.e., being able to communicate with the participants in a manner that is both culturally sensitive and culturally relevant). As such, assuming a culturally progressive approach goes even beyond a culturally competent and cultural responsive approach by including the adoption of a proactive stance to the role that culture plays in the research process. And we define culture here as do Onwuegbuzie and Frels (in press), as ‘a set of experiences, learned traditions, principles, and guides of behavior that are shared among members of a particular group that are dynamic and influential in communication’ (p. 83). This broad definition of culture encompasses all under-represented, underserved, marginalized, and oppressed populations.

At its most basic level, critical dialectical pluralism takes a pluralist ontological stance (hence the word *pluralism*), and operates under the assumption that there are multiple important kinds of reality that include subjective, objective, and intersubjective realities. Critical dialectical pluralism relies on the dialectical, dialogical, and hermeneutical approach to understanding phenomena (hence the word *dialectical*). Like

dialectical pluralism, critical dialectical pluralism serves as a metaparadigm by promoting the mixing or combining of at least two distinct paradigms in a manner that privileges those paradigms or worldviews (e.g., transformative-emancipatory, critical theory, critical race theory, critical ethnography, critical quantitative research, feminist theory) that promote and sustain social justice, but, at the same time, goes beyond the existing social justice-based paradigms (hence the word *critical*).

At its most unique level, critical dialectical pluralist research involves: (a) the researcher and participant(s) co-consolidating important ideas and concepts from multiple paradigms into a new and coherent whole that drives each research study; (b) the researcher serving as a culturally progressive facilitator instead of assuming the role of expert; (c) the participant given an active role in decision making with regard to inquiry logics (i.e., research objectives, purposes, and questions; broad research designs and procedures; appropriate sampling designs and logic; criteria of quality for methodology and inferences; and standards for reporting; Greene, 2006, 2008); (d) meta-ethical co-construction of knowledge; (e) dissemination of research findings by one or more of the participants; and (f) use of research findings by one or more of the participants in a manner that empowers the participant(s). Further, critical dialectical pluralist research is characterized by a dialogic style of facilitating, intimate highly personal participant-researcher relationships, and a community review of the media used for dissemination (e.g., video, manuscript), and writing in ordinary language.

At its optimal level, critical dialectical pluralist researchers promote all five of Guba and Lincoln’s (1989) authenticity criteria that embody constructionist understanding: (a) fairness: The extent to which the researcher values the process of evaluation; (b) ontological authenticity: The extent to which the researcher assesses how the participant has become more informed and aware; (c) educative authenticity: The criteria by which those involved in the interview process have become more understanding of others; (d) catalytic authenticity: The extent by which actions are facilitated and stimulated by participants; and

(e) tactical authenticity: The extent to which participants are empowered to act on the results and subsequent understanding from a given study. Further, critical dialectical pluralist research represents a person-centered approach (Rogers, 1957), which is based on humanistic ideas for counseling, as follows: It represents a departure from the research-based medical model (i.e., research as expert and participant as passive)—or what we call *medical model research*; and it represents a trust in people that, if a safe research environment existed, then all people would naturally move toward greater awareness and a fulfilling of their potentials. Also, critical dialectical pluralist researchers believe that the following potentials are within all research participants: (a) sociability, or the need to be with other human beings and a desire to know and be known by other people; (b) being trusting and trustworthy; (c) being curious about the world, and open to experience; and (d) being creative and compassionate.

At its most flexible level, critical dialectical pluralist research can be conducted within the quantitative research tradition, qualitative research tradition, or mixed research tradition; however, it is typically optimal when conducted using mixed research techniques. As such, critical dialectical pluralist researchers should be trained to conduct competently qualitative, quantitative, *and* mixed research, as well as in cultural studies, counseling, and philosophy. Table 3 provides a summary of critical dialectical pluralism with respect to three axiomatic components (i.e., ontological, epistemological, and methodological foundations) and seven issues (i.e., nature of knowledge, knowledge accumulation, goodness or quality criteria, values, ethics, inquirer posture, and training), which builds on the works of Onwuegbuzie, Johnson, and Collins (2009); Johnson (2011, 2012), and Christ (2013).

EXEMPLARS OF CRITICAL DIALECTICAL PLURALISM RESEARCH

Critical dialectical pluralism was motivated by our experiences collaborating with two people who at the time were not part of the academic community, namely, Kasey Mallette and Jason Frels, which culminated in co-presentations at

the *International Mixed Methods Conference* in Baltimore in 2010 (Frels, Frels, & Onwuegbuzie, 2010; Onwuegbuzie, Mallette, & Mallette, 2010). At the time of the international conference presentation with her mother (Marla Mallette), Kasey Mallette was merely a 15-year old high school student. At this conference, Kasey presented her two mixed research studies, one which she conducted as a middle-grade student at Unity Point School, Carbondale, IL, while in the seventh grade (Mallette, 2008), and a follow-up study that she conducted the following year, while she was in the eighth-grade (Mallette, 2009). In her first study (Mallette, 2008), Kasey used experimental techniques to examine how the way in which a stimuli is encoded influences retrieval from long-term memory among seventh- and eighth-grade students ($N = 118$). Her experimentally based mixed research design comprised two experimental groups and one control group that generated both quantitative data and qualitative data. Kasey's analyses included an analysis of variance of the quantitative data and a classical content analysis of the qualitative data, which yielded meta-inferences that provided support for the importance of retrieval cues.

In her follow-up study (Mallette, 2009), Kasey investigated the difference between episodic memory and semantic memory among eighth-grade students as they were engaged in a field trip to Springfield, IL, to study Illinois history and government. As part of her study, Kasey constructed a 12-item test on the US Constitution and an open-ended instrument in which participants were asked to explain the details of their field trip. Kasey's qualitative analysis of the open-ended responses extracted six common themes that represented basic events. Also, Kasey conducted a correlation analysis and dependent samples t test to examine the relationship between episodic and semantic memory, as well as differences between these two types of memory as a function of gender and self-reported ability, respectively. Kasey reported numerous findings, including the observation that participants' performance levels were statistically significantly higher on the semantic test than on the episodic test, with a small-to-moderate effect size.

TABLE 3: UNDERLYING BELIEF SYSTEMS OF THE CRITICAL DIALECTICAL PLURALISM PARADIGMS AND DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTICS

Paradigmatic element	Characteristics
Ontology	Pluralistic stance; multiple realities (i.e., subjective, objective, intersubjective); synechism (i.e., rejects traditional dualisms such as subjectivism vs. objectivism; facts vs. values; order vs. change; micro vs. macro; quality vs. quantity; convergence vs. divergence; reason vs. faith); syncretism (i.e., consolidation into a new and coherent whole different and contradictory principles and practices); high regard for the reality and influence of the inner world of human experience in action; current truth, meaning, and knowledge are tentative and changing; virtual reality influenced by social, political, cultural, ethnic, racial, economic, and gender values that evolve over time; subjective-objective reality co-created by mind and given world order; nature of reality is an awareness of meaning for self-interpretation using language; rejection of cultural deficit model; acknowledgment that inequalities and social injustice exist; identification of power dynamics and structures; recognition that bringing voice of under-represented, underserved, marginalized, and oppressed people can lead to social change
Epistemology	Knowledge is both constructed and based on the reality of the world we experience and live in; justification comes via warranted assertability; value-mediated findings; experiential, propositional, and practical knowing; co-created findings; knowing the world is ideological, political, and embodies values
Methodology	Thoughtful/dialectical eclecticism and pluralism of methods and perspectives; researchers-as-facilitators; participants-as-researchers; emphasis on participatory and action-oriented research; participants-as-researchers determine what works and solve their own individual and social problems; dialogic, dialectical, and hermeneutical; political participation in collaborative action research; emphasis on practical; connecting theory and practice; promoting practical theory; promoting reciprocity
Rhetorical	Use of both impersonal passive voice and technical terminology, as well as rich and thick (empathic) description; critical discourse; use of language based on shared experiential context; promotion of negotiated meta-voice; participants-as-researchers make decisions about how and what information is disseminated
Nature of knowledge	Intersubjectivity, emtic viewpoints (i.e., emic and etic viewpoints); respect for nomological and ideographic knowledge; structural/historical insights; entrenched epistemological emphasis on practical knowing and critical subjectivity
Knowledge accumulation	Follows dynamic homeostatic process of belief, doubt, inquiry, modified belief, new doubt, new inquiry... in an infinite loop, where each participant-as-researcher constantly attempts to improve upon past understandings in a way that fits and works in the world in which he or she operates; internal statistical generalization; analytical generalization; case-to-case transfer; naturalistic generalization; historical revisionism; generalization by similarity; in communities of inquiry contained in communities of practice
Goodness or quality criteria	Reliability, internal validity, external validity, objectivity; trustworthiness, dependability, confirmability, transferability; authenticity; historical situatedness; reduction of ignorance and misperceptions; optimally involve participants in knowledge construction and validation; congruence of experiential, presentational, propositional, and practical knowing leads to action by participants-as-researchers to transform their own communities; social inquiry as a practice, not only a way of knowing
Axiology (i.e., values)	Takes an explicitly value-oriented approach to research that is derived from cultural values; specifically endorses shared values such as democracy, freedom, equality, and progress; seeks primarily to reveal social injustice; the major role of research should be to work toward social betterment and social justice
Ethics	Extrinsic and intrinsic; justification comes in the form of warranted assertability; moral proclivity toward revelation; researchers-as-facilitators maximize transparency of the research process
Inquirer posture	Offers the <i>pragmatic method</i> for solving traditional philosophical dualisms as well as for making methodological choices; transformative researcher-as-facilitator who serves as an advocate and activist
Training	Qualitative, quantitative, mixed research; substantive theories; cultural studies; counseling; philosophy; values of altruism, empowerment, and liberation; resocialization; history; values of altruism, empowerment, and liberation; researchers, who learn via active engagement in study, need emotional competence, democratic disposition and skills
Qualitative analysis	All forms of qualitative analyses
Quantitative analysis	All forms of descriptive and inferential statistics that lead to either internal (statistical) generalizations or external (statistical) generalizations

Not surprisingly, both of Kasey's applied psychology studies received an outstanding paper award in both the local science fair and the regional science fair. Also, her articles received the highest honor at the state of Illinois science fair. Interestingly, Kasey was able to obtain consultation from two leading scholars in the field – Dr. Jack Snowman, Professor Emeritus at Southern Illinois University Carbondale, who consulted her on her 2008 study; and Dr. Endel Tulving, OC, FRSC, FRS, Professor Emeritus at the University of Toronto and a Visiting Professor of Psychology at Washington University, who consulted her on her 2009 study. Dr. Tulving is a Canadian neuroscientist with a specialty in episodic memory – one of his major contributions being his theory of *encoding specificity*.

Her mother, Marla, by herself, or Marla and one of us (Tony) as a team, could have showcased Kasey's study at the *International Mixed Methods Conference*. However, it was obvious to us that it would be much more rewarding and empowering for Kasey if she was to present her own findings at this international conference, despite her age. Because she had conducted the study, we realized that we could never capture Kasey's voice as meaningfully as Kasey could herself. Kasey's presentation was breathtaking. It was so inspiring to see a 15-year-old child presenting research at an international conference using terms such as 'correlation', 't test', 'effect size', and 'themes'. And, to our knowledge, Kasey is the youngest person not only to present at the *International Mixed Methods Conference* but at any international conference!

At the same *International Mixed Methods Conference*, both Rebecca and Tony co-presented a research paper with Rebecca's son, Jason (Frels et al., 2010), who served as the lead presenter on the topic of how geographic information systems (GIS) can help mixed researchers increase the dimensionality of their analyses and interpretations by enabling them to think spatially when conceptualizing, designing, and implementing their mixed research studies. What was most impressive about this presentation was that Jason did not possess a graduate degree at the time! Both Kasey and Jason also took an active role at the conference proposal writing stage.

Other examples of studies where critical dialectical pluralism provided the lens include the series of studies conducted by and with our doctoral

students. For example, Wao et al. (2009) conducted a mixed research study to examine: (a) 148 doctoral students' perceptions of barriers that prevent them from reading empirical articles; and (b) the relationship between these students' perceived barriers and their levels of reading vocabulary and comprehension. The nine-person team consisted of seven doctoral students and two professors. The seven doctoral students had the dual role of researchers and participants in the study, contributing both quantitative and qualitative data – alongside the other 141 doctoral students. Thus, these seven participant-researchers assumed an emtic perspective. The two professors on the team served as research-facilitators. It was established that doctoral students are an understudied and underserved in the area of reading ability because it is commonly assumed that doctoral students are competent readers and do not have any reading difficulties (Collins & Onwuegbuzie, 2002–2003; Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2002). In fact, this study represented the first inquiry examining reading comprehension among doctoral students. Indeed, when they initially submitted their manuscripts for review for publication, two of the reviewers expressed surprise that *any* doctoral students would have reading difficulties and questioned the importance and utility of the study, with one reviewer naively declaring: 'As far as I am concerned, if a doctoral student has reading difficulties, then he/she should not be in the doctoral program.' Yet, as surmised by Bengé, Onwuegbuzie, Mallette, and Burgess (2010), 'any reader – even a doctoral student – who is given a text laden with unfamiliar vocabulary and unfamiliar content could at any time be a struggling reader' (p. 84). The participant-researchers in Wao et al.'s (2009) study took part in every stage of the mixed research process – from research conceptualization to research utilization – including all of them co-presenting the initial findings at a research conference (Wao et al., 2005). Thus, all five of Guba and Lincoln's (1989) authenticity criteria were promoted to a large degree. All of these elements are consistent with the critical dialectical pluralism stance.

As a follow-up to Wao et al.'s (2009) study, Bengé and her colleagues (e.g., Bengé, Onwuegbuzie, et al., 2010; Burgess, Bengé, Onwuegbuzie, & Mallette, 2012b) conducted a series of studies involving

a four-person team: Two students (participant-researchers) and two professors (research-facilitators). For instance, Benge, Onwuegbuzie, et al. (2010) used a multi-stage mixed analysis to investigate 205 doctoral students' levels of reading ability, their perceptions of barriers that prevented them from reading empirical articles, and the relationship between these two sets of constructs. Burgess et al. (2012b) also used mixed research techniques to examine doctoral students' reasons for reading research articles. Consistent with the tenets of critical dialectical pluralism, both participant-researchers chose the mode of disseminating the findings (i.e., conference, journal), and co-presented their findings at a prestigious national conference, namely, the American Educational Research Association (Benge, Burgess, et al., 2010); and a prestigious international conference, namely, the International Mixed Methods Conference (Burgess, Benge, Onwuegbuzie, & Mallette, 2012a). Anderson and her four doctoral participant-researchers' paper presentation (Anderson et al., 2012b) and published journal article (Anderson et al., 2012a) provide another example, as does the published article involving five master's students (Bartlett et al., 2012). Currently, we are working with numerous other master's and doctoral students using our critical dialectical pluralist lens. For instance, an article that was presented at conferences involving a master's-level participant-researcher (i.e., Partain & Frels, 2012) and another article co-presented at the International Mixed Methods Conference by two doctoral-level participant-researchers (Rosli, Ingram, Onwuegbuzie, & Frels, 2012) have been submitted for review for possible publication in nationally refereed journals. As noted previously, critical dialectical pluralist research can be conducted within the qualitative research tradition, as was the case for the study of Ban et al. (2005).

Providing evidence of the power and efficacy of critical dialectical pluralistic research is the fact that, on many occasions, the participant-researchers have been extremely emotional as they told their own stories through their research studies while making conference presentations. Thus, an additional advantage of conducting critical dialectical pluralistic mixed research is that through the participant-researchers, not only can external statistical

generalizations (i.e., making generalizations, predictions, or inferences on data yielded from a representative statistical [i.e., optimally random and large] sample to the *population* from which the sample was drawn [i.e., universalistic generalizability]; cf. Onwuegbuzie, Slate, Leech, & Collins, 2009) naturally be made (assuming that a representative sample is studied), but also internal statistical generalizations (i.e., making generalizations, predictions, or inferences on data obtained from one or more representative or elite study participants [e.g., key informants, sub-sample members] to the *sample* from which the participant[s] was selected [i.e., particularistic generalizability]), analytic generalizations (i.e., 'the investigator is striving to generalize a particular set of [case study] results to some broader theory'; Yin, 2009, p. 43) and are 'applied to wider theory on the basis of how selected cases "fit" with general constructs'; Curtis, Gesler, Smith, & Washburn, 2000, p. 1002), and case-to-case transfer (i.e., making generalizations or inferences from one case to another [similar] case; Miles & Huberman, 1994) can be more easily justified. In fact, uniquely, even naturalistic generalizations (i.e., the consumers of the research make generalizations entirely, or at least in part, from their personal or vicarious experiences; Stake & Trumbull, 1982) can be made – as we have observed on numerous occasions – because the participant-researchers are in a position to compare their quantitative and/or qualitative data that formed part of the overall dataset to those of the other participants in the study. The increased ability to justify generalizations in critical dialectical pluralist research, in turn, (potentially) improves the quality of inferences and meta-inferences made (cf. Onwuegbuzie & Collins, in press) – thereby making it easier to achieve *verstehen*.

An important footnote with regard to critical dialectical pluralistic research is that it does not matter how much power is transferred from the research-facilitators to the participant-researchers by giving them maximal control over decisions made at all stages of the research process, some level of power dynamic always will remain (e.g., power stemming from professor/student relationships or the research-facilitator-as-experienced researcher/participant-researchers-as-naïve researchers [or emergent scholars]). Indeed, Benge, Robbins, and

Onwuegbuzie (2013) currently are studying power dynamics in critical dialectical pluralist research. Thus, as recommended by Collins, Onwuegbuzie, and Johnson (2012b), we suggest that the participant-researchers undergo a series of debriefing interviews at every stage of the research process that is conducted by research-facilitators (or disinterested peers, when the power differential between the research-facilitators and participant-researchers is great) to assess the degree that all five of Guba and Lincoln's (1989) authenticity criteria are being promoted, at least to a degree (also see Frost, 2012).

PREVIOUS CRITICAL DIALECTICAL PLURALIST MIXED RESEARCH IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

At this point, we would like to acknowledge Dr. Ernest Morrell, Associate Professor in the Graduate School of Education and Information Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles and Associate Director of UCLA's Institute for Democracy, Education, and Access. Although he does not label it as such, we believe that much of Dr. Morrell's cutting-edge and inspirational work in elementary and secondary schools resembles critical dialectical pluralism. Interestingly, the titles of his books alone suggest a critical dialectical pluralist lens (e.g., Morrell, 2004a, 2004b, 2008). Morrell's research has included how to provide youth the skills they need to succeed academically and empower themselves as citizens in a multicultural democracy. For example, Morrell and Duncan-Andrade (2002) used research to demonstrate how academic literacy among urban youth can be understood and promoted by engaging them in hip-hop culture – which led to a front-page story that was published in the Los Angeles Times on January 14, 2003, as well as several YouTube videos (e.g., <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tNpu0GaGty0>). Thus, as can be seen, adopting what we call a critical dialectical pluralist lens has so much potential for galvanizing and empowering underserved, under-researched, under-represented, marginalized, and oppressed individuals and groups.

ONGOING CRITICAL DIALECTICAL PLURALIST MIXED RESEARCH IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

A critical dialectical pluralist mixed research project about which we are especially excited currently

is taking place in a 10th-grade classroom of at-risk students throughout the Spring 2013 semester. This project was initiated by Dr. Hannah Gerber (Sam Houston State University, Texas, USA) and also involves Dr. Sandra Abrams (St. John's University, New York) and Dr. Cindy Bengé (Program Director for High School Language Arts at Aldine Independent School District, Texas, USA) – all of whom will serve as research-facilitators.

Dr. Gerber has developed a semester-long, videogame-based curriculum. In so doing, she hypothesizes that this curriculum will increase literacy learning, as well as motivation to read, motivation to learn, and a number of other cognitive and affective outcomes. Also, as part of this project, Tony Onwuegbuzie will teach mixed research techniques to the class of 10th graders. They will likely be the first ever high school students to be taught formally a semester-long mixed research course. In particular, Tony will teach the students how to construct questionnaires and rating scales, how to collect observational data, how to conduct face-to-face and multi-modal (e.g., online, Second Life, SMS) individual interviews, how to conduct face-to-face and multi-modal focus group interviews, how to analyze questionnaire and rating scale responses using Excel, how to transcribe and to analyze (e.g., classical content analysis) interview and focus group responses using Excel, and how to conduct mixed analyses. Then, these students will apply the mixed research techniques that they learn to conduct a critical dialectical pluralist mixed research study (facilitated by Hannah, Sandra, Cindy, and Tony as research-facilitators) of the effect of videogames on literacy learning and motivation to learn. For example, for the qualitative phase of their study, the students will interview each other after co-constructing their questions regarding the effectiveness of videogames, as well as analyze each other's reflexive journal entries. Also, for the quantitative phase of their study, the students will develop and administer a questionnaire eliciting information about videogame behaviors (and other topics of their choice) and a rating scale measuring a construct of their choice (e.g., attitude toward videogames as an educational tool) to a large sample of students

in their school. With respect to the dissemination of their findings, consistent with critical dialectical pluralism, the students will be asked to select from several avenues such as creating a YouTube video, presenting to doctoral students and faculty members at Sam Houston State University (approximately a 75-minute drive from their school), and presenting at a conference (e.g., Literacy Research Association Conference, December 4–7, 2013, which, conveniently, will be held in Dallas, Texas – approximately 4 hours drive from their school).

Alongside this study, the research-facilitators will be examining formally the process and product (i.e., educational outcomes) associated with the semester-long course – which is already underway – but also will be monitoring the critical dialectical pluralism process. As part of monitoring the process, each member of the research-facilitator team will undergo debriefing interviews, as will select members of the participant-researcher team. We look forward to sharing the results of our exciting project in the future.

CONCLUSION

As can be seen, critical dialectical pluralism goes far beyond other transformative-based paradigms (e.g., transformative-emancipatory, critical theory, critical race theory, critical ethnography, critical quantitative research, feminist theory) by maximally involving participants-as-researchers throughout the (mixed) research process. The premise behind critical dialectical pluralism is that wide power differentials prevail in these transformative-based paradigms because the researchers representing these paradigms exercise control over decisions made at all stages of the research process, especially with respect to research dissemination and utilization. Because the knowledge that is constructed emanates from the participants themselves, they should have a voice as to how it should be disseminated. Too often, researchers go into study sites, collect the data they need, secure publication of their findings (e.g., journals articles, book chapters, books) in a way that advances their careers, and do not pay enough attention of how the research that they conducted impacted the participants beyond the study (i.e., long-term beneficence).

When we act in this way, we assume the role more of takers than givers, which we believe is unacceptable, especially when we are conducting social justice and human rights research. Thus, we believe that critical dialectical pluralism offers a way to redress this balance.

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