

Editorial

Trends and Challenges for Methodology

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The past year was important for the journal *Methodology*. In 2015, Nekane Balluerka and Arantxa Gorostiaga stepped down from the Editorial team. Luis Manuel Lozano and Jose-Luis Padilla took up their editorial responsibilities, trying to maintain the high standards reached by our colleagues. We as editors want to thank Nekane Balluerka and Arantxa Gorostiaga for their work in advancing *Methodology* as a journal for discussing and solving methodological problems in empirical social sciences. At the same time, *Methodology* has seen an increasing number of manuscript submissions and an increasing impact factor. According to Journal Citation Reports, the 2015 Impact Factor of 1.935 places *Methodology* in the top quartile for the “Social Sciences, Mathematical Methods” category. We intend to use this editorial to lay out future plans for both the content of the journal and how we want to streamline the editorial process for authors.

As was discussed in an earlier editorial (Lugtig & Balluerka, 2015), we believe that social and health sciences share methods and practices across disciplines more than what appears at first sight. Differences between disciplines stem more often from sociological aspects of the professions, or historical differences, rather than methodological necessity. We will keep encouraging researchers and professionals from different academic and professional fields to disseminate their methodological contributions through *Methodology*.

As an associate professor at the University of Granada, the background of José-Luis Padilla is mainly in psychometrics. He teaches courses of psychometrics, test construction and questionnaire design, validity theory, test adaptation, and cognitive pretest methods. His current research focuses on psychometrics, questionnaire development, validity, and cross-cultural research within a mixed method framework by combining quantitative and qualitative methods like cognitive interviewing, behavior coding, or focus groups. From collaborations in survey research projects with public and private bodies, he has learnt that practical research

problems, resources, time constraints, not just determine current methodological practices, but also provide a worthy opportunity to develop new practical methodological solutions. The world is changing, and social science methodology should change too.

We both think that innovative methodologies can not only help to advance substantive knowledge in the social and health sciences, but are also important for policy-making, and so have a direct effect on people's lives. Our colleagues in the applied social disciplines also request that methodologists step out of their professional comfort zones. Keeping *Methodology*'s definitional characteristics, we feel that the journal should welcome, for instance, articles that address methodological challenges opened up by the advances in computing (e.g., big data), social networks, and new data collection technologies (e.g., sensors to measure behavior). The new ecological contexts where old and new behaviors develop need new methodological approaches. For example, “big data” techniques are often hailed as a possibility for social scientists. Yet, the use of big data in the social sciences is in need of a firm methodological framework. We argue that issues that social scientists have studied for decades apply to big data as well. A framework for using big data successfully should contain measurement errors, selection problems, just like “traditional” data collection methods. Estimating the size of errors in big data may require the development of new statistical methodologies as well (e.g., data fusion or new types of Latent Variable models). We are particularly welcoming proposals for special issues, or individual papers on these new frontiers of social science in the next years. No “artificial” barriers like qualitative versus quantitative methods, or applied versus basic research, should prevent researchers and professional from considering *Methodology* to publish their methodological works. The methodological scope of the journal and the quality of the manuscripts are the only criteria we use in the editorial process.

On the editorial side, there are also challenges we are trying to solve. Authors request a quick and transparent editorial process. We will do our best to improve the editorial work we do. One immediate objective we have for the future is to implement an online editorial system. We are expecting to continue our successful collaboration with Hogrefe Publishing and its team in implementing these changes. We also rely on the historical support of the European Association Methodology board and its members to improve access and dissemination of the published papers. Finally, there cannot be a high-quality journal without authors, readers, and reviewers. We commit ourselves to harness communication with them to maintain the standards of quality reached by *Methodology* since its inception 12 years ago.

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