

**Researcher Situatedness: A Mixed-Methods Research Approach Regarding  
Positive Male Role-Models in the Lives of Elementary-Aged Students**

Brett Taylor

University of Northern British Columbia

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Dr. Shirley Giroux

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**Abstract**

It is the belief of this work that *Mixed-Methods Research* will provide the most fundamentally useful approach to investigate the influence of male role-models in the lives of elementary-aged students. This work will focus on the strengths of an *MMR* method, comprised of qualitative and quantitative analysis, while also acknowledging the limitations of said research methodologies. It will highlight, through focus group and personal interviews, the relevance of qualitative study, while simultaneously illuminating the validity of pairing them with quantitative questionnaires. Throughout this work, the relevance, and subsequent value of an *MMR* concentration will become apparent and will show how a multi-pronged discourse with members of the Godson, and larger Abbotsford, community will provide the most in-depth, well-developed analysis of the positive influence and effect that male teachers and educators can have in the lives of elementary-aged children.

*Keywords:* Mixed-Methods, Qualitative, Quantitative, Positive Male Role-Model, Research Strengths, Research Limitations

**Proposed Research Method**

As I've delved further into my professional practice as a Grade Five teacher in an elementary school, I've come to the realization that two research methods are the most appropriate for my individual context and experience: Both the *Qualitative* and *Quantitative* research methods. As a result, I believe that taking a *Mixed-Methods* approach will be the most beneficial and useful for me in the future.

Working, and creating analysis, from an approach of pragmatism, (Leavy, 2017) I believe that a *Mixed Methods* research design is the most well-rounded strategy that I will be able to utilize in my own research in the future. I believe that approaching potential biases, as well as recognizing the limitations of *MMR* (Mixed-Methods Research) with a pragmatic lens will help me better recognize the strengths and challenges of this research method.

As I wish to conduct my research with young elementary aged students, I need to be aware of the demographics and the social constructs of the area in which I aim to work. Working within the Abbotsford School District, which is the city that I am most familiar with, is the neighborhood which I aim to conduct most of my research. More specifically, I am attempting to work extensively with students and families from a number of different socio-economic backgrounds and school populations. Moreso, as my own professional practice has led me to working predominantly in inner-city school environments, that is where I intend to spend a significant portion of my focus on.

My main intended research goal is to contextualize and subsequently attempt to quantify the influence and effect that “positive male role-models” have on the long-term social and academic success of elementary school students. Within this, I will have to specifically define the terms “positive role-model,” as well as “academic success.” While I have yet to adequately construct my own definitions of these terms, I believe that their clearly being explained will prove to be very important throughout the research process. Once I have further developed specific criteria around how I wish to define these, I will be able to move towards conducting research in the way that I see fit.

My intended research will do its best to adhere to the previously mentioned *MMR* approach. First, it is my intention to coordinate both small group interviews with families from the school community that I currently work within. Second, I hope to be able to have more in-depth interviews with both elementary-aged students, as well as their

families, while being conscious of creating opportunities to speak with both single and two-parent households.

After speaking with students, parents, and families through the qualitatively-focused interviews, it is my intention to pair them with a quantitative series of questionnaires. I hope to contextualize these with a number of questions observing both student, and subsequent family perceptions, of the importance of male educators in the daily lives of elementary school students. I intend to use a five-point Likert Scale to highlight said perceptions, and then highlight any trends within this collected data.

I feel it will be effective to conduct these questionnaires multiple times throughout a single school year, with them coinciding with the end of each term on the trimester schedule which Abbotsford elementary schools operate on. In theory, this would provide insight as to how initial perceptions on the effectiveness and influence of male teachers and educators and how they may change throughout a school year. As there is a disproportionately low percentage of male teachers in elementary schools, in comparison to their female counterparts, language in the questionnaires, as well as the content of individual questions, will need to recognize this.

Additionally, I believe that this comprehensive approach to research lends well to the continuation of this data to be utilized in a longer longitudinal study. The extension of quantitative questionnaires, as well as updated personal interviews, with both students and families, working in conjunction with the collection of standardized district and provincial learning assessments (FSA's in grades four, seven, and ten, etc.) will provide

significant statistical data to corroborate the anecdotal answers, and subsequent reflections, of the participant families.

I believe that this *MMR* approach will benefit from the strengths of each individual methodology but will also have to overcome their shortcomings as well. First, the strengths of the qualitative research are demonstrated by the level of detail and attention to the individuals that will participate in the focus group and individual interviews. I believe that these will provide detailed insights as well as individual beliefs and potential pre-existing biases of the research participants. Also, due to the fact of my potentially having a pre-existing relationship with participants, I believe that the honesty and transparency that can be eschewed from qualitative investigation will give intimate accounts that can't be gleaned from any other type of research.

Second, the significance of the accompanying quantitative analysis is the much further reaching scope of the research itself. Its ability to reach a large portion of the Godson population, as well as that of other Abbotsford schools, provides a substantial amount of statistical data that will provide the basis for short and long-term investigation. Additionally, it will also create the starting point to conduct the proposed longitudinal research, which will strongly demonstrate the long-term ramifications of the involvement of male teachers and educators.

Oppositely, it's very important to recognize the real limitations of both research types within the *MMR* umbrella. While the strength of qualitative research is its ability to

provide in-depth insights of individual participants, it is extremely difficult to provide many individual accounts due to the intensive interaction and significant amount of time which each interview requires. Additionally, as a number of these interviews will be with families associated with the Abbotsford School District, many of which I have pre-existing relationships with, it will be extremely difficult to avoid some level of confirmation bias with the information that is provided, due to preconceived ideas surrounding the effectiveness, and influence of “positive male role models.” As a perceived “insider” within the community, I will need to be very aware of how my own “power comes to bear,” (Leavy, 2017) and be cognizant of how my own presence within the community could affect the honesty, and potential effectiveness, of the answers given by those surveyed.

While the anonymity provided by the quantitative questionnaires may entice some to answer more honestly, it could also have the complete opposite effect for others. While one of the strengths of the quantitative analysis in the *MMR* approach I’m proposing is the size and scale which information can be distributed to, and collected from, the downside is the potential for dishonest, untruthful answers that may not necessarily add any value to the research being conducted. Without direct, in-person interactions, connection and interpretations between the researcher (myself) and participants, could possibly lead to challenges with misinterpretation of the questions, which may result in potentially inaccurate data and descriptions.

Similarly, I believe that another one of the shortcomings of the quantitative component of my proposed research is the potential lack of depth, understanding, and

explanation that would come with widespread data collection, which is different from the interview process in the qualitative section of my *MMR* approach, where there is an area for the development of further explanation if a participant does not fully understand what is being asked of them. As such, the full scope of understanding regarding what is intended with the research may not be as obvious to participants and may only scratch the surface on the “value of male role-models,” and their potential importance in inner-city elementary schools.

One final issue that the quantitative questionnaires struggle with is the recognition of the family dynamics that they are associated with. In other words, creating questionnaires that only focus on the worth of male role-models and their subsequent leadership, may unintentionally alienate, or downplay the importance and effectiveness of female modelling and leadership. Similarly, I believe that it may also elicit similar reactions with ‘other’ families, particularly households with single fathers, and same-sex partners raising children. As such, I believe it clearly highlights several of the limitations surrounding quantitative, widespread investigation. While it reaches a far-wider number of participants, it often only provides a brief, superficial snapshot that presents an incomplete, impersonal portrayal of participants.

Despite the previously mentioned shortcomings of both qualitative and quantitative research methods, I believe taking a combined *MMR* approach best combines the strengths of the two. Whether it be the intimate detail of the focus group and individual interviews, or the wide-reaching impartial questionnaires, the *MMR* research that I am proposing provides the most thorough, informed representation of

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the research question that I am looking to quantify and answer. As such, by being able to maintain the significant level of pragmatism associated with *MMR*, I believe that I will be able to appropriately assess the significance of positive male role-models, and the subsequent success of their students, in both short and long-term investigations.

## References

Leavy, P. (2017). *Research design: Quantitative, qualitative, mixed methods, arts-based, and community-based participatory research approaches*. The Guilford Press.