Mixed Methods Strategies

CSS 506

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**Sequential Explanatory Strategy (separate stages)**

* Collect & analyze QUAN
* Collect & analyze quan
* Integrated during interpretation phase
* May or may not have theoretical perspective
* Purpose: use qual to assist in explaining and interpreting the QUAN
* Useful with unexpected QUAN results – qual examines in detail
* Strength: separate stages in design, description, reporting
* Weakness: length of time b/c of 2 separate stages (esp if equal emphasis)

**Sequential Exploratory Strategy (2 stages)**

* Priority in 1st stage
* Collect & analyze QUAL
* Collect & analyze quan
* Integrated during interpretation phase
* May or may not have theoretical perspective
* Quan assists interpretation of QUAL
* Purpose: explore a phenomenon (determine the distribution of a phenomenon within a chosen population); grounded theory (testing elements of an emergent theory so that it can be generalized); developing and testing new instrument (psychometrics)
* Strength: separate stages in design, description, reporting
* Weakness: length of time b/c of 2 separate stages; can be difficult to bild from the QUAL analysis to quan data collection

**Sequential Transformative Strategy (2 stages)**

* Either method used first, either priority or equal emphasis
* Results integrated during interpretation phase
* Theoretical perspective drives research not just methods
* Purpose: employ the methods that will best serve the theoretical perspective (give voice to diverse perspectives, advocate for participants, better understand phenomenon or process that is changing as a result of being studied)
* Strength: separate stages in design, description, reporting
* Weakness: length of time b/c of 2 separate stages (esp if equal emphasis)

**Concurrent Triangulation (one stage)**

* 2 methods in attempt to confirm, cross-validate, or corroborate findings within one study.
* Methods offset weaknesses of other method
* Ideally, priority is equal but not always practical
* Integrates results during interpretation phase: convergence strengthens knowledge claims or explains lack of convergence
* Strength: familiar; well-validated and substantiated findings; shorter data collection than 2 stage studies
* Weakness: great effort and expertise to study phenomenon with 2 methods; difficulty comparing the results b/c of different methods; unclear how to resolve discrepancies in findings between methods

**Concurrent Nested Strategy (one stage)**

* Predominant method that guides project (lesser is embedded or nested, which can address a different question or seek information at a different level)
* Data mixed during analysis phase
* Purposes: broader perspective than one method (embedded quan can enrich description of the sample participants; embedded qual describe aspect of quan that can’t be quantified); one within a framework of the other (e.g., conduct experiment as case study of different treatments)
* Strengths: shorter data collection; both quan and qual; gain multiple perspectives from different types of data or different levels within study
* Limitations: data must be transformed to be integrated within analysis phase; little written guidance; unclear how to resolve discrepancies in findings between methods; unequal evidence b/c of priority of one method makes it difficult to interpret results

**Concurrent Transformative Strategy (one stage)**

* Specific theoretical perspective drives research (critical theory; advocacy; participatory research; or a conceptual or theoretical framework)
* Purpose: theoretical perspective drives all methodological choices (problem definition, design and data source identification, analyzing, interpreting, reporting results throughout process)
* Choice of model (triangulation or nested) facilitates theoretical perspective
* Equal or unequal priority during single collection stage
* Integration most often during analysis phase (but can be during interpretation phase)
* Strengths: transformative framework; shorter data collection; both quan and qual; gain multiple perspectives from different types of data or different levels within study
* Limitations: data must be transformed to be integrated within analysis phase; little written guidance; unclear how to resolve discrepancies in findings between methods; unequal evidence b/c of priority of one method makes it difficult to interpret results