

# Improving Aging And Public Health Research: Qualitative And Mixed Methods

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## A philosophical discussion of qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods research in social science

Philosophy of social science

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### Abstract

**Purpose** – Much of the contemporary methodological literature tends to be self-referential and frequently ignorant of the breadth and depth of philosophical assumptions underpinning various methodological positions. Without a clear understanding of the philosophical underpinnings, logically deriving applicable validity criteria becomes very difficult (if not impossible). As a result, the purpose of this paper is to present a critical review of historical and more recent philosophical arguments for qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods research in social science.

**Design/methodology/approach** – A targeted review of seminal philosophy of science papers dealing with ontological and epistemological assumptions of, and relation between, natural and social science.

**Findings** – The paper highlights the link between ontological/epistemological assumptions and methodological choices in social science. Key differences between the natural and social science are discussed and situated within the main paradigms.

**Originality/value** – The paper draws attention to a range of difficulties associated with the adoption of the natural sciences and the related positivist approaches as a role model for work in the social sciences. Unique contributions of interpretive and critical approaches are highlighted. The paper may be of value to scholars who are interested in the historical context of the still-ongoing qualitative-quantitative debate.

**Keywords** Quantitative, Qualitative, Positivism, Paradigm, Mixed methods research, Interpretivism

**Paper type** General review

### 1. Introduction

Natural sciences are generally viewed as being descriptive because physical behaviors are explained through mathematical formulae, empirical because relevant variables denote observables, functional because each input is related to exactly one output, and deterministic because the future is in principle predictable (Brodbeck, 1954). The epistemological status of social sciences may be viewed either as a factual question that could in principle be answered scientifically, or as a normative question that cannot be answered empirically (Gewirth, 1954). Nevertheless, positivism, which views physics as science par excellence (Kincaid, 1990b), maintains that social sciences are in essence no different from natural sciences (Follesdal, 1979), and that, as such, they should also principally aim for nomological prediction and explanation (Hempel and Oppenheim, 1948). Scholars argue that "There are numerous valid reasons for positivists to follow the natural sciences as a role model for work in the social sciences" (Hasan, 2014, p. 4). It may be assumed that few practicing social scientists disagree since quantitative research methods, which originate in the positivistic natural sciences, have also been dominating the social and the behavioral sciences (Alise and Teddlie, 2010; Lopez-Fernandez and Molina-Azorin, 2011; Yang, 2013; Rod, 2009; Black, 2006; Kapoulas and Mitic, 2012). Moreover, "Qualitative scholars struggle to obtain tenure, their research is often underfunded, the journals they publish in are given low impact scores" (Denzin, 2017, p. 15).

However, critics have argued that due to their distinct problem domains the social and the natural sciences cannot be regarded as alternatives and, thus, should not be directly compared (Machlup, 1961). In contrast to natural sciences, which largely deal with



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Improving Aging and Public Health Research: Qualitative and Mixed Methods [ Leslie Curry, Renee Rose Shield, Terrie Todd Wetle] on ospekuny.com \*FREE\*. Yet, in some areas of research in public health (e.g., in gerontology), quantitative methodologies alone may not be sufficient because they do not provide the. This new book will enhance researchers' capacity to design, conduct, and publish scientifically sound qualitative and mixed methods research in aging. With the., English, Book, Illustrated edition: Improving aging and public health research: qualitative and mixed methods / Leslie Curry, Renee Shield, Terrie Wetle. signals a growing acceptance of qualitative and social science research, the . Improving aging and public health research: Qualitative and mixed methods. Mixed methods studies, in which qualitative and quantitative methods are .. Improving Aging and Public Health Research: Qualitative and Mixed Methods. ous research that has the potential to enhance the lives of older people and aging and public health research: Qualitative and mixed methods. (pp. ). In L. Curry, R. Shield, & T. Wetle (Eds.), Improving aging and public health research: Qualitative and mixed methods (pp. ). Washington. From text to codings: Inter coding reliability assessment in qualitative analysis. Improving aging and public health research: Qualitative and mixed methods. quantitative methods: Applications to health research. T. T. Wetle (Eds.), Improving aging and public health research: Qualitative and mixed methods (pp. Photovoice: Use of a participatory action research method to explore the chronic Improving aging and public health research: Qualitative and mixed methods. Mixed Methods Research Training Program for the Health Sciences . on improving aging and public health research using qualitative and mixed methods . Quantitative, Qualitative, and Mixed Methods applied anthropology, psychology, public health, sociology, and social-work settings. Health. Public health research methods for the 21st century Des. Mixing Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Research. Clark, P. and Bowling, A. () Quality of everyday life in long stay institutions for the elderly: an () Improving design and conduct of randomised trials by embedding them in qualitative Forthofer, M.S. () Status of mixed methods in the health sciences. Research methods of participant for Improving Youth Mental Health Service overlapping age criteria and funding, a family .. This mixed-methods study examined. Not only does this enhance the robustness of the study, it may lead to different More widespread use of mixed methods in trials of complex interventions is Research Programme on tackling health inequalities, and focused on older people.

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