

RIG Symposium B5: Family/Community Based Participatory Research RIG: State of the Science in Research of Families and Communities: Innovative Approaches to Study Methods and Data Analyses

The Beauty of Mixed Methods in Illuminating Relational Processes in Research of Families

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The distinctive nature of the family as a system of interacting persons raises special challenges for family nurse researchers. The purpose of this paper is to highlight the utility and value of mixed methods in advancing knowledge of complex relational processes in research of families. Three studies employing mixed methods will serve as exemplars. In two studies, the mixed method design enabled the investigators to better capture the experience of urinary symptoms for men with Parkinson's disease and for their partners, and the impact of these symptoms on relationships and quality of life. Affective responses from urinary symptoms, particularly embarrassment, had a profound impact on relationships, activities, and quality of life. In the third study, the use of quantitative outcome measures and focus groups will be described in a family intervention with Veterans with traumatic brain injury and their family members that occurs in the home. Findings from the dominant quantitative method will be enhanced through findings from the focus groups to yield a broader perspective of the impact of the intervention on Veterans and caregivers and to identify barriers and facilitators to the intervention. Independent interviews with the Veterans and caregivers will solicit information on daily life after traumatic brain injury, the impact of the intervention on daily life, and the overall experience with the intervention. Furthermore, the investigators anticipate that differences between the Veterans' and caregivers' perceptions of the Veterans' strengths and limitations will be related to relational conflicts and issues. Mixed methods have the potential to illuminate complex relational phenomena and provide richer data, particularly in research of families, where a multitude of sociocultural, community, emotional, physical, and economic factors need to be considered. These methods can also provide invaluable insights on how a family intervention works or does not work within specific contexts, such as within the home environment.