

CHAPTER 4

Designs in Justice-Centered Mixed Methods Research

- *How can I design my mixed methods project to focus on meaningful, positive change?*
- *What do I need to be cautious about in our process?* •

In this chapter, we consider the ways different research designs can be integrated into justice-centered mixed methods research (MMR). If we recognize *research is an inherently influential act*, when we ask questions about the world, gather data—collecting, generating, and analyzing the data—we are not merely observing reality, we are shaping it. For researchers committed to creating and nourishing meaningful, positive change, the challenge is both in electing methods and also in designing a process that respects **complexity**, seeking to ensure equity and inclusivity, and generating transformative insights. And depending on how we proceed, MMR, with its ability to integrate diverse perspectives, is uniquely positioned to meet this challenge.

We can now move into thinking about MMR designs in general and think about the ways a justice-centered lens can fit within each type. Research designs in MMR can be thought of as happening *convergently* or *sequentially*, meaning those occurring at the same general time or one component after another, and in an explanatory or exploratory manner. As we've discussed throughout the book, terms shift depending on who is writing the text, and research designs have varied phrasings. For instance, in this book, we follow Creswell and Plano Clark's use of the phrase **convergent parallel design**, which others use interchangeably with **concurrent mixed methods design** (Creswell, 2003; Plano Clark & Ivankova, 2016; Mertens & Wilson, 2019). Whatever type of design, and whatever type of research, there will always remain questions and ways we can consider, especially when we are

working to address **wicked problems** and **super wicked problems**, such as climate change or **educational equity**.

What Can a Mixed Methods Research Design Look Like? Where Does a Justice-Centered Lens Fit?

There are three primary types of MMR designs—convergent, exploratory, and sequential—and we will explore how a justice-centered lens can be applied to each. For instance, in a *convergent design*, data from both qualitative and quantitative sources are collected and analyzed simultaneously. This approach can be particularly useful in understanding **disparities** in health care access by combining survey data on service availability with in-depth interviews capturing lived experiences. In contrast, an *exploratory design* begins with qualitative methods to look to uncover nuanced insights that might inform the development of quantitative tools. For example, using focus groups to shape a large-scale survey on climate resilience in vulnerable communities. **Sequential designs**, where one phase of the research builds directly on the results of the previous, offer the opportunity to refine and deepen understanding. For example, using statistical analysis to identify trends in educational experiences and outcomes, and then conducting interviews to uncover the sociocultural factors driving those trends.

Convergent Parallel Mixed Methods Research Design

So, let's look a bit further into **convergent parallel mixed methods design**. When approaching MMR through a justice-centered lens, we can work to recognize that the design itself is an ethical choice. For example, convergent designs, which integrate qualitative and quantitative data simultaneously, can highlight disparities or amplify marginalized voices that might be overlooked if one approach dominated. Sequential designs, on the other hand, offer opportunities to iteratively refine questions and methods, ensuring that each phase deepens our understanding of the structural or systemic factors contributing to inequities. Whether explanatory or exploratory, the justice-centered lens encourages researchers to ask: *Whose stories and experiences are at the forefront? What power dynamics are embedded in the design?* We can then question our approaches to “uncover” versions of reality, working to move away from the authoritative Researcher with a Big R. Instead, we can recognize that “truths” require engaging with others around *their* “truths,” using various types of knowledge and ways of seeing, such as heart knowledge (which is explored further in the “Insights from Practice” feature in this chapter). By remaining attuned to these considerations, researchers can craft studies that not only uncover “truths” (which is plural) but also actively work toward solutions that are inclusive, equitable, and transformative. Here's one way we can define convergent parallel design and how to center justice-centered aims.

Convergent MMR parallel design

A **convergent parallel design** uses one method to complement and make up for the weaknesses of the other method, providing a “fuller” picture of the findings. In this design, qualitative and quantitative data are collected around the same time, and one method does not inform the other.

Justice-centered convergent MMR parallel design

A **justice-centered convergent parallel design** purposefully integrates a focus on effecting positive change, using one method to complement and make up for the weaknesses of the other method. The methods are drawn on in terms of their potential to create versions of reality that are likely to support those most marginalized in the social and ecological fabric. The aim is to generate data from each method simultaneously, bearing in mind the quest to serve a justice-oriented purpose.

When we read through studies, we can think about the ways in which justice-centered lenses are embedded and how findings might affect the communities involved, such as those related to policy, community empowerment, and systemic change. In the following example, we provide a broad overview of an MMR study using a convergent parallel design.

Example Study of a Convergent Parallel Design Using a Justice-Centered Mixed Methods Research Lens

Raphael Karutz and Sigrun Kabisch (2023) examined the relationship between drought and rural-to-urban mobility in Pune, India. The researchers used in-depth interviews, survey data, and monthly precipitation data in a convergent parallel mixed methods design. In collecting the data at about the same time, their study showed a significant effect of drought at the origin to mobility to Pune and the underlying reasoning, decision-making process of participants, and the outcomes of these relationships.

While the steps toward policy change and empowering communities are not directly noted, the researchers highlight issues of structural inequities. They conclude with an emphasis on the need for continued research and work promoting enhanced urban development along with “support systems for vulnerable population groups” (Karutz & Kabisch, 2023, p. 10).

A convergent parallel design meant that the researchers collected the qualitative and quantitative data around the same time and that one phase (qualitative or quantitative) did not drive or inform another (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). This design can be used when one type of data/finding complements and strengthens the other data/findings, but one data collection method does not drive the other. In this design, the analysis and integration of qualitative and quantitative data create a more complete picture than a single method

alone. Also, in this design, integration can be conducted as an iterative process in which qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis inform one another (Crabtree et al., 2005). Further questions we could ask to further our understanding of the justice-centered lens could include *How were the findings useful for the communities? In what ways were environmental justice aims affected and addressed through the study or as suggested for future studies?*

And if we were to integrate a justice-centered lens, a convergent parallel MMR design might involve, for instance, collecting survey data from community members about their experiences with local public transportation—focusing on accessibility, affordability, and **reliability**, while at a similar time, conducting focus groups with marginalized **groups/groupings**, such as people with **disabilities** (or people with **different ability** to emphasize the strengths of people often labeled as disabled), or low-income workers, to understand the barriers they face in using these services. With these two **datasets**, we would be collecting them independently but then they would be analyzed together to help us better understand a more comprehensive view of transportation equity. In this way, the design would provide guidance for us in both seeing statistical trends and personal narratives, and helping to identify widespread systemic issues and deeply rooted, lived realities.

Exploratory Sequential Mixed Methods Research Design

Now, we can move into thinking about another direction for our MMR. Another type of design in MMR is an **exploratory sequential design**, which can be considered broadly or with a justice-centered lens. Here's one way we can define these concepts.

Exploratory MMR sequential design

An **exploratory MMR sequential design** is when qualitative data are collected first and used to inform the development of the quantitative phase of the research.

Justice-centered exploratory MMR sequential design

A **justice-centered exploratory MMR sequential design** uses a purposeful approach to affect positive change. It incorporates the collection (or generation) of qualitative data first, which is then used to inform the development of the quantitative phase of the research.

For example, the themes discovered in interviews could be used to develop a survey that is highly relevant to the population we want to learn more about.

The following offers an example of an exploratory sequential design, a study with justice-centered aims throughout (see the next page). In this example, tensions around integrating epistemological differences are explored, such as through the use of a final focus group discussion to address conflicting data.

Example Study of an Exploratory Sequential Design with a Justice-Centered Lens

Carolyn Love and colleagues (Love, Booyesen, & Essed, 2018) used their three-phase exploratory sequential design to understand how Black women doing social justice work talk about their perceptions of **race** in the United States. They purposefully sought to effect positive change for this community. First, they conducted six in-depth interviews with Black women (two women from each generation: Baby Boomers, GenX, and Millennials). What they learned from these women shaped the questions for the focus group. This brought more women to the “table” to help answer their research questions and understand what themes were relevant across a broader group of Black women. From Phase 1, they created a survey that would help them understand to what extent these broad themes played out in a larger sample of their target population.

While they could have analyzed their qualitative and quantitative data and finished the study, instead they used a third phase, with more focus groups. In the third phase, they discussed their findings with another group of women of the sample population to work through contradictions in the qualitative/quantitative integration and provide interpretive validity of their integrated findings. An additional powerful component of their work and a means for embedding justice-centered lenses was the use of a clear **conceptual framework** rooted in critical and emancipatory theories (i.e., **Black feminist epistemology**, social identity theory, cognitive intergroup theory).

Complex questions and issues require strong methodological approaches that can hold space for complexity but still allow for meaningful interpretation (a topic Cheryl Poth explains further in her “Insight from Practice” later in this chapter). In using multiple theories to set up their theoretical constructs of **standpoint**, **social identity**, and **intersectionality**, Love and colleagues’ (2018) mixed methods design framework both builds theory (often seen as a potential outcome of qualitative research) and tests theory (often seen as a potential outcome of qualitative and quantitative research (Shah & Corley, 2006)). They use a flexible framework to capture the complexity of a very big topic both broadly and in-depth, and they loop their findings back into the framework to both test and build on theories. We might critically reflect on the study and think of our own work. We might ask, *How are these theories affecting the community today? In what ways are excluded and marginalized groups/groupings involved in future steps for influencing positive change they’re wanting?*

Explanatory Sequential Mixed Methods Research Design

Another type of mixed methods design is an explanatory sequential design. This uses quantitative data collected at the beginning and then creates qualitative data to explain what the quantitative data revealed. Here is a way to define this type of design along with how we could reframe the design through a justice-oriented lens.

Explanatory MMR sequential design

An **explanatory MMR sequential design** uses qualitative methods to explain the findings of quantitative data.

Justice-centered explanatory MMR sequential design

A **justice-centered explanatory MMR sequential design** uses a purposeful lens of influencing positive change for using qualitative methods to explain findings of quantitative data.

For example, interviews can be used to help explain the lived experiences of survey results.

Now, let's look at an example study using an explanatory sequential design in a study centering justice-oriented aims.

Example Study of an Explanatory Sequential Design with a Justice-Centered Lens

In 2014, Tanvir Hasan and their research team (Hasan, Muhaddes, Camellia, Selim, & Rashid, 2014) used this kind of mixed methods design to understand the experience of Bangladeshi women living with disability resulting from interpersonal violence (IPV). Using a survey of 226 women to examine the prevalence of IPV, the researchers used these data to create in-depth interview questions. Hasan and colleagues interviewed 16 women using convenience sampling. Some of the participants had answered the survey and others had been referred to the researchers by an organization. Questions included topics such as the types of violence experienced, the formal and informal support they sought, and expectations of violence prevention and seeking justice.

These interviews were conducted to get at the broad trends of IPV experience with this sample of women, to understand their lived experiences beyond the violence, and to explain the results of the survey. From an understanding of the trends of IPV in this population and the women's lived experiences, the researchers were able to offer specific suggestions for policy and interventions supporting Bangladeshi women living with a disability with IPV experiences.

As we read through research and engage with it ourselves, we can remember to gently question processes and outcomes. For instance, while the types of MMR design approaches are clearly defined in Hasan et al.'s (2014) study, there remain challenges to creating MMR in general. Thus, we could allow ourselves to wonder about, consider, and explore the next stages of the study, asking questions such as:

- How did the study support positive goals for the community?
- What did the community itself think about and want from the study? What were the long-term effects of the study on the goals (i.e., interpersonal violence)?

These types of questions are integral for clarifying and expanding our understanding of studies in justice-centered research, and help us to consider and apply them to our work as well.

Insights from Practice: Reflections and Case Studies about Designs in Justice-Centered Mixed Methods Research

- *So, how can we go about conceptualizing and designing moving forward with justice-centered MMR?* •

While MMR design can be seen as a straightforward and clear process, it takes work to align and realign our purpose on justice, and it takes reflection, too. MMR is often described as “messy” (Sanscartier, 2020). Add the complexity of justice-centered work of any kind, and there are challenges and bumps along the way that we as mixed methods researchers will face.

What is published in journals is often smoothed and polished, with messy processes frequently excluded, leaving many of us feeling as if we are doing something “wrong” if we face challenges. In some spaces, there has been a deliberate effort to expose the **messiness** of research, such as in the special issue of the *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* on “Qualitative and Mixed Methods Failures” (see the seven articles in the issue edited by Clark & Sousa, 2020). Recognizing these challenges and speaking about them is a step toward finding meaningful, justice-centered ways forward, such as *What do we do when we’re working to integrate decolonial research and create meaningful action from what we’ve learned?* (Held, 2020). *What happens when our data collection methods completely don’t work with the community we’re trying to reach? How do we manage to maintain a rigid flexibility, holding on to our goals while allowing ourselves to pivot into new directions to embrace other’s needs?* (CohenMiller et al., 2020). Ultimately, when we care deeply about the communities and spaces we’re working with, there can be added pressures. We’ve found it’s helpful to remember we’re not alone in facing research challenges, problems, and failures, whether it’s power struggles, aligning perspectives and worldviews, or facing our own emotions in the process. Yet, it is the embracing of the messiness, while still creating rigorous and ethical justice-centered MMR, that allows for the deep value of the work.

The following are two “Insights from Practice” that delve into a reflective process of conceptualizing justice-centered MMR. Starting off, we hear from Ato Rockcliffe, who identifies as a cisgender Caribbean man, from the University of Trinidad and Tobago. With a commitment to justice, he brings together education, sociology, and sports to address social development. He explains a history of having taught at the University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT) and in the Centre for Kinesiology Physical Education and Sport (CKPES), which had been an academic arm of the Academy of Sport (AoS):

I had planned to follow in the tradition of Sport for Development (SfD) scholars I admired, like Cameron, Lyras, Mafukidze, Mwaanga, and others in making a meaningful contribution to the body of knowledge in SfD. This was the logical choice since my official area of teaching and research at the University was SfD. However, my commitment to service-oriented scholarship demanded that I take a different path.

Rockcliffe has a history of working with communities as a peer leader, trainer, researcher, and facilitator in the Caribbean and is connected as well with the University of London. In his “Insight,” he shares a reflection on their practice, delving into the “roots” of his convictions, into the depth of narrative and stories. Through his explanation, we get to hear about the process of learning and developing justice-centered MMR and the challenges faced. In finding a way forward, Rockcliffe emphasizes the heart of a researcher as guiding ethical processes and finding ways to address meaningful solutions with communities.

Reflecting on My Practice

Ato Rockcliffe

The Roots of My Convictions

Stories are powerful. We can tell sad stories, entertaining stories, “true stories.” Residing within the academy yet not confined by it, I proudly identify as an “intellectual roots-man” (IRM). As such, I seek to tell stories rooted in facts, contexts, and nuances. The voices of the people, starting with those whom Fanon called the wretched of the earth, must be featured. My love for the common people, coupled with my commitment to Truth and truths, compel my justice-centered research projects to be grounded in a philosophy of deep love or as the late bell hooks (2000) would call it, “a love ethic.”

My Research Context and Purpose

Mertens (2007) suggested that in the genre of justice-centered mixed methods research, researchers should make clear their recognition of inequalities, social injustices, or social shortfalls. She also suggested that the intersection of the social phenomena under investigation and the mixed methods research (MMR) used should be ventilated (Mertens, 2007).

Anecdotally, I observed that graduates in sport and development were not finding employment and were not displaying the qualities of a university graduate beyond their command of the technical skills. Based on my observations and informal discourses with colleagues, students, and graduates, I decided to study “graduateness” and employability to foster positive change for alumni as well as current and future students.

The aims of this study were to (1) gain insights into the culture of graduateness from the comments of instructors, staff, and recent graduates, who all participated in a free-listing exercise; (2) conceptualize the socialization process by capturing

the instructors' views in semi-structured interviews; (3) explore the potential influence of the Academy of Sport's socialization process by estimating the influence of graduate satisfaction on graduate employability confidence via a structured survey; and (4) explore parallel themes among the insights gained from the data and information collected in the three preceding objectives (Rockcliffe, 2021).

Reflection

I recount this experience because I believe that the study turned out to be rigorous and robust, with an aim to facilitate meaning flourishing. However, the process was not smooth, and buy-in from the ethics committee and scholars at the university was an arduous process. They found the approach to be "busy" and convoluted, which meant I had to make strong justifications for my choices. My lack of exposure to formal training in MMR and my belief that I needed to use a context-specific MMR design compounded my challenges. It is not that the university community was unsupportive of justice-centered work, or at least I don't think that was the case. I believe their trepidation was somewhat legitimate as to justice's place in methodological consideration in terms of introducing more bias. It is impossible for me to disagree with them more strongly. But they were the Academy. As beautiful and as useful as the Academy has been, it has also at times been ugly in its perpetuation of injustice. My saving grace was the senior methodologist at the university and a supportive advisory committee. Impressed by my curiosity and commitment, they provided the space, exposure to apt scholars like Mertens (2007) and Poth (2019), and the mentorship necessary for me to undertake the study in a meaningful way.

With my enhanced awareness of MMR praxis and theory, I am now able to observe weaknesses in the study's approach. My description of integration at the procedural level was not thorough; my use of the observation method, though meaningful, lacked rigor; and my research diagram did not do a great job of providing a visual explanation of my research approach, although adequate. However, the lessons I took away and hope others would are: (1) A commitment to improvement and excellence must be constant but should not paralyze the best effort in the moment, and (2) a justice so expedient that it does not consider other critical factors becomes something less than Justice (Neibuhr, 1967; West, 2013). To some extent, the initial pushback by the university made the work better. And the situating of the work in a tradition of justice rooted in love made the work useful (Neibuhr, 1967; West, 2013).

Concluding Reflection and Commitment

Justice-centered mixed methods research approaches, for me, are about a deep commitment to the love ethic, which is manifested as justice. It is also about utilizing the insight from both qualitative and quantitative methods and integrating them to tell a fuller, more nuanced story of a phenomenon. It is paramount that our commitment to improving the human condition demand that we are robust with our methodological practices and continually reflexive about our work both during and after it. A commitment to ethical inquiry and a willingness to engage with complexity and embrace lifelong learning are necessary qualities for scholars striving to effect positive change through their scholarly endeavors.

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In the next “Insight from Practice,” Cheryl Poth, from the University of Alberta, Canada, offers direction to embrace the messiness of research. Identifying as a cisgender white woman, Poth relates the narrative to her own community-engaged work, sharing about conducting and designing justice-centered MMR informed by a complexity lens. Poth’s insight and attention to justice run deep, drawing from her own experiences and those of others who have shared with her, and from her professional commitment to social betterment. In the following, she shares about a particular project with the *DeafBlind* community where MMR afforded unique insights that translated into real-world outcomes of sustained program funding.

Conceptualizing and Designing Justice-Centered Mixed Methods Research Studies of Complex Phenomena

Cheryl Poth

Recognizing the complexity inherent in justice-centered research settings requires new ways of conceptualizing and designing mixed methods studies. Such an approach is necessary because justice-centered researchers investigate phenomena involving changeable human behaviors that defy investigation using methods assuming stable conditions and where the whole is more complex than the sum of its parts. In my own mixed methods research, I have found complexity theory useful for conceptualizing my study phenomena as complex adaptive systems (e.g., Bullock & Poth, 2024; Poth, Bulut, Aquilina, & Otto, 2021; Poth & Bullock, 2023). When I can grasp and interpret the surrounding research conditions, I can design complexity-informed mixed methods research to focus on holistic systems, their interactions, and emergent properties (Poth, 2018). A complexity-informed mixed methods approach enables researchers to respond appropriately to the nonlinear dynamics and emergent properties inherent in such justice-centered investigations.

One example of how complexity-informed mixed methods research offers a unique lens to mitigate some of the inequities and ethical issues that arise when relying on sole sources of qualitative or quantitative evidence emerges from my work

with DeafBlind community members. This experience stands out for me because the novel insights from the key informant interviews with administrative program data served to ensure continued funding for a program that supported a DeafBlind community's access to and participation in essential community services and social, vocational, educational, and recreational activities. The usefulness of mixed methods to demonstrate the health inequities experienced by people with disabilities is highlighted by the recent work of Kuper, Rotenberg, Banks, and Smythe (2024). In this work, we further argue the essential role of justice-centered mixed methods research in addressing the inadequate access to health care and community services for low-incidence and underserved communities. As a low-incidence disability occurring in less than 1% of the general population, much remains to be understood about the DeafBlind community as culturally and linguistically unique and with accessible language needs that remain underrepresented in research.

We began with key informant interviews as a way to explore and generate a community-engaged understanding of the inherent complexities surrounding the development of support services for adults with dual sensory loss. DeafBlind community members identified their desired outcome as experiencing self-determined activities that enhance their well-being, resilience, and belonging. Together, we identified key stakeholders as including DeafBlind community members, health and social service organizational providers, and frontline staff. Among the essential roles for some frontline staff involved communicating through American Sign Language (ASL), Protactile, and voice-over, depending on which language was accessible to individual community members. Interpreters and Video Relay Service technology were used to ensure individual communication preferences were met. Administrative program data collected over the previous year included service booking data (e.g., types of outings requested, time needed for each booking, frequency of bookings); program document review (e.g., reports, program training materials); and participant engagement surveys (e.g., demographic information about individual community member's unique safety, communication, and support needs as well as level of satisfaction with services, wants, and needs and ongoing goals with the program). We mapped the thematic findings onto the existing administrative program data collected over the past year to generate an initial understanding of the emergent property of the study phenomena as a complex adaptive system.

We use a figure to visually represent our emerging understanding of the interdependencies among system structures, emergent properties, and stakeholder influences surrounding the support services for a DeafBlind community. Figure 4.1 depicts the interactions afforded by frontline staff as essential for helping community members self-organize to achieve visibility, voice, and agency as an emergent property. That both individual and collective access and participation in essential community services and social, vocational, educational, and recreational activities result from systems being interconnected, and parts entwined with other parts means that service delivery will necessarily influence, as well as be influenced by, various sectors and members (e.g., industries, other frontline staff). That adaptation resulting from living systems surviving and thriving within their constantly changing environments means that access and participation necessarily enhance the social and health well-being of low-incidence and underserved populations. Thus helping to develop more ecologically valid data collection plans that leverage integration and mitigate the inherent limitations in individual quantitative and qualitative data collections.

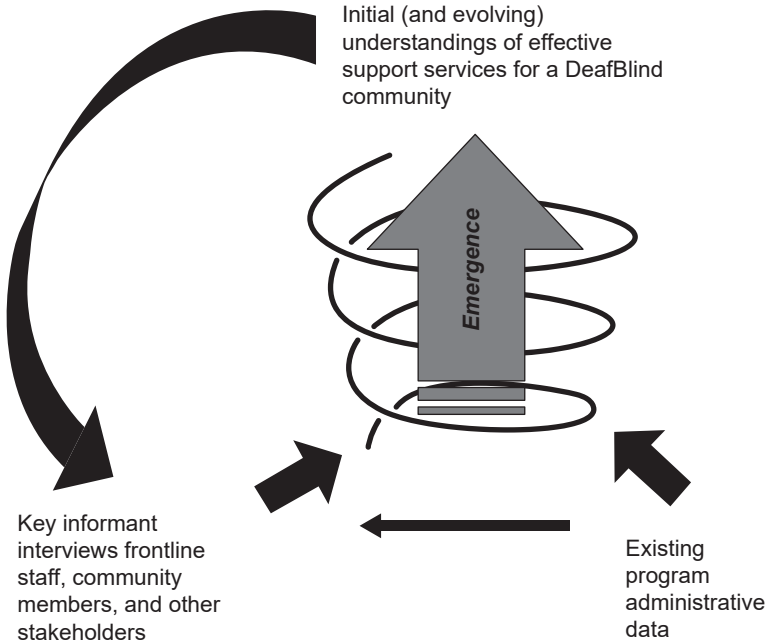


FIGURE 4.1. Interdependencies. (From Cheryl Poth.)

Adopting a complexity lens helped us identify the emergent property and select data that would provide an initial understanding from which to extend. In the future, I propose expanding the scope of data sources and perspectives best suited for capturing their influence on this emergent property and including further key stakeholders.

Justice-centered mixed methods researchers benefit from design approaches that conceptualize the phenomena they are studying as complex adaptive systems to represent more accurately the dynamic realities they will need to account for in their designs. This helps inform data sources, sampling, and appropriate methods for measuring the nonlinear trajectories and assessing the patterns emerging within the systems that are continuously self-forming and interacting with one another. Generating in-depth descriptions and insights about the nature of the patterns of communication, and how the patterns changed and evolved, is necessary to understand the essential supports necessary for fulsome participation to realize adequate access to health care and social services. This then helps researchers whose studies involve low-incidence and underserved communities to avoid distorted and overly simplistic views of the study phenomena and thus address validity concerns in their research designs.

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Linking Insights to Justice-Centered Ways Forward in Mixed Methods Research Designs

The “Insights from Practice” from Rockcliffe and Poth highlight the challenges and potential paths forward for justice-centered MMR, offering a depth of understanding regarding considerations around rigor, validity, and complexity. Validity is seen here as tied to the value of and commitment to justice-centered aims, a “love ethic” informing the research process and creation of heartfelt “truths.” Overall, we learn in Ato Rockcliffe’s reflection of his personal path and worldview about the challenges faced in gaining buy-in from gatekeepers for the messy and complex work of justice-centered MMR. In reflecting on his narrative, we can consider how we might move from findings to influencing policies and programs, how the voices and experiences of those we’re working with can be integrated into actionable recommendations, and as Rockcliffe noted, how to strengthen integration such as at the procedural level. In the end, Rockcliffe’s reflection encourages mixed methods researchers to adopt the aim of continual improvement, as opposed to a complete and perfect product, as a framework to avoid being “paralyzed” in trying to create justice-centered MMR.

From Cheryl Poth’s reflection, we learn about working in complex systems and ways to think about a systems-level approach for recognizing the dynamic community needs, including ethical considerations (e.g., ensuring accessible communication). Her “Insight” encourages us as justice-centered researchers to be wary of essentializing qualities of underserved populations and to consider how we can work with community members for engaging in decision making and data interpretation. And then instead to use a complexity lens and, when possible, additional breadth of data to facilitate solutions, such as better access to essential community services.

By discussing the complexities of their paths as researchers, as well as the complexities of justice-centered MMR design in general, Rockcliffe and Poth, respectively, encourage us as mixed methods researchers to persist despite

the “messiness.” The feeling from the stories advocates for frameworks that accommodate justice-centered aims, and we could further explore actionable strategies for overcoming barriers. Instead of hiding away any messiness and problems, or trying to fit the challenges into a process that doesn’t quite work, the researchers showcase a depth of awareness, willingness, and steps centering justice-centered research through embracing complexity.

Critical Self-Reflection Questions about Designing Justice-Centered Mixed Methods Research

In this chapter, we have explored ways to conceptualize justice-centered MMR, while keeping our eyes attuned to central themes of relevant topics, such as equity, justice-centered approaches, worldviews, paradigms, and reflexivity. Recognizing our choices throughout the process of conceptualizing and designing a research study starts with ourselves, and is an iterative process throughout the research study (in conjunction with key participants). Whether in convergent parallel, exploratory sequential, or explanatory sequential design, for instance, we have the privilege and power to align our purpose with justice-centered aims, as defined in the situation. The “Insights from Practice” highlight the importance of a reflexive process to better understand ourselves and the work we engage in with communities.

Below, we offer a set of critical self-reflection questions that can be answered individually or as a group activity. The questions relate to assumptions and approaches to justice-centered MMR, and how we can embrace messiness and complexity as we move forward reflectively to develop rigorous, ethical, and meaningful praxis with and for communities.

Topic	Critical self-reflection questions to ask ourselves
Sequential and convergent designs in justice-centered MMR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>How can I imagine my proposed research topic through a justice-centered lens?</i> • <i>How could I design my study to use a sequential MMR design? What could it look like as a convergent design? What are the ways a justice-centered lens could be embedded within each of these directions?</i>
Messiness and complexity of justice-centered MMR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What “messiness” is inherent in my project?</i> • <i>What complexities can I seek to incorporate (e.g., hearing the appropriate voices)?</i>

Reflection and improvement in justice-centered MMR

- How can I manage my own feelings and doubts when I face resistance to justice-centered designs?
- How can I integrate processes of continual improvement within my design and process? In what ways could this be integrated for myself as a researcher and within the study itself?
- What aims do I have for my justice-centered mixed methods research? Do I know if they align with what the community wants and in what ways?

SUGGESTED FURTHER READINGS

For Learning More about Strategies to Integrate Justice-Centered Aims

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