

## synergy workshop 2012

# Mixed methodology in Health Psychology: using Pragmatism to overcome the 'irreconcilable epistemological differences' between quantitative and qualitative methods

### What was it all about?

We started with a theoretical input on pragmatism and on how to take into account theory and data to generate and specify research questions. This was the basis for discussing qualitative and quantitative methods: Each method can explore different aspects of a phenomenon and using them together can increase the confidence in findings. We developed research proposals in small groups and argued about at which stages of a specific design, qualitative and quantitative methods are most appropriate. Our discussion stopped at a point that might be a research question in the future. Most mixed methods studies profit from quantitative and qualitative approaches but not of their integration. To sum it up: To conduct good research, you have to have a real world research question that changes health services and people's health. You have to use various methods to reach these goals. Qualitative and quantitative methods can equally contribute to improving research and ideally, combining both is more than the sum of its parts.

### What was it like?

The SYNERGY workshop created a dialogue between quantitative and qualitative researchers. The contrasting expertise was applied to clarify the meaning of mixed methods methodology and to develop mixed-method designs. Actually, it was not only the topic of mixed methodology which generated more knowledge; it was great fun to meet researchers from all over the world and exchange research experiences. Thanks to Paul (Flowers) and Rachel (Shaw) for facilitating, SYNERGY for organizing and all participants for discussing.

### What did you gain?

Discussions about pros and cons of qualitative and quantitative methods in research designs opened my mind for different approaches and encouraged me to more specifically state mixed methods in a research proposal. It is up to the future to find more ways to integrate quantitative and qualitative methods and results. The special interest group will keep us connected and up-to-date with upcoming proposals, projects and papers. ■

*Anna Levke Butt*

The logo for the SYNERGY workshop, featuring the word "synergy" in a lowercase, sans-serif font. The "s" is orange, and the "ynergy" is black.