

Time Well Spent (in communities)

How can we best learn about the issues and resilience in our communities? Although they held promise, qualitative methods have become increasingly routine and not as informative as originally envisioned.

Contextual views are becoming more important in Community Psychology



Figure 1 Photograph by endlesswatts. Used under CCO

and community-based research generally. We need to use more participatory methods to capture the nuances of societal, cultural and

environmental contexts. This paper shows how we can adapt such methods into shorter forms than currently used by social

Hybrid 'packages' of research methods can give us more context while not taking too much longer than current methods

anthropologists and some sociologists. With more description of context, Community Psychologists can rely less on theorizing and apply what they learn more directly to social action.

We argue that there is less difference between the common 'qualitative' and 'quantitative' methods than is often thought. They both are short-term methods, usually without intensive engagement of people and their contexts.

Highlights

Advance beyond traditional methods of psychology and spend more time with your people and communities!

Record all the different contexts in which they are embedded.

Underlying both methodologies is the assumption that what people say can replace any direct observation. Both qualitative and quantitative methods also assume that with sufficient numbers of people or enough ‘thematic saturation’, we can reduce/eliminate doubts about validity. Both methodologies frequently assume that specific aspects of people’s lives can be studied separately from other aspects of their lives.

We argue that while these issues were first raised in Indigenous and Feminist research critiques because standard methods did not work well, they apply to all research. We therefore present two hybrid procedures which combine less frequently used research methods to overcome some of the issues we raised with both qualitative and quantitative methods. We hope that these might encourage community researchers to use intensive research methods more often and be able to turn this into social action more quickly.

Results

➤ We suggest two “hybrid” ways of knowing:

Conversational Research-involves multiple informal conversations with each person. Let each participant decide what to tell. It is ok, even welcomed, to go “off-topic.” Form a friendly relationship between the researcher and the researched, when appropriate. Make observations of events in their life, discuss the ideas you are forming with them, and invite them to become partners in the

HOW DID A COMMUNITY PSYCHOLOGY PERSPECTIVE INFORM YOUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE ISSUES, RESULTS, AND IMPLICATIONS?

Community psychologists work more closely with people and their contexts than other psychologists. This means we need better ways of describing social, economic, patriarchal and political contexts in which people are embedded.

What Does This Mean For?

Research and Evaluation: We can change our research methods to better engage with the contexts of people and communities.

Practice: We need to include more descriptions of context in order to understand people. Conversational and Embedded Research are two possible ways to do this.

research.

Embedded Research-moves beyond Conversational Research to form a stronger relationship. Embedded Researchers spend time with participants as appropriate, in their context, talking about events.

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