

Editorial Statement

The editorial statement printed below is part of American Journal of Community Psychology's ongoing involvement with the NIMH Editor's Consortium on Development and Psychopathology. We believe it is congruent with AJCP's continuing commitment to a diversity of methodologies.

Over the last 2 years members of the NIMH Editor's Consortium on Development and Psychopathology have engaged in consultation with leading scholars concerning the status of research on childhood mental health and illness. As a result of this ongoing dialogue, we have concluded that there now exists a critical opportunity to increase the practical yield and tangible impact of research on the causes and consequences of child psychopathology. We believe that traditional, variable-oriented, sample-based research strategies and data analytic techniques, alone cannot reveal the complex causal processes that likely give rise to normal and abnormal behavior among different children and adolescents. To a large extent, the predominant methods of our social and psychological sciences have valued quantitative approaches over all others, to the exclusion of methods which might clarify the ecological context of behavioral and social phenomena.

Qualitative methods have not traditionally been reflected in the manner in which the science is carried out and in what has generally been deemed acceptable for journal publication. These research methods (e.g., rigorous qualitative and ethnographic approaches, in-depth single-case studies) have not been institutionally legitimized, and most incentives (e.g., grant awards, promotion, career advancement, and academic prestige) appear yoked to hypothesis-testing rather than hypothesis-generating (descriptive) research. Coupled with logistic constraints to journal space, these problems result in fragmentation of our research knowledge, lack of synthetic understanding, and limited theoretical progress. As a whole, journals and academic committees have valued data-based (i.e., quantitative) publications over more theoretical and/or integrative work, such as critical reviews, conceptual contributions, and analytic inquiries at the individual case level. However, such articles often lead to new scientific understanding and critical advances, and are among the most widely cited, based on standard citation indices.

We have concluded that as editors we have a responsibility to encourage a greater investment in the development and use of diverse and multiple methods. In order to bridge the gap between descriptive knowledge and causal understanding of normal and abnormal development and behavior in their ecological context, we encourage submissions that utilize varied research strategies. Integrative, critical

reviews and theoretical pieces are also encouraged. Exceptional and novel contributions of this nature will be given priority, both in terms of time to publication as well as journal space.

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