

Methodological Madness: A Call to Know Better

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There is widespread debate concerning the impact culture and cultural differences has on what and how we know about psychological phenomena. Questioning culture and cultural difference results in methodological biases and undermines the credibility of knowers that come from underrepresented groups. Miranda Fricker calls this type of epistemic injustice, testimonial injustice. This phenomenon contributes to deficiencies in psychological research and the hermeneutical marginalization of members of underrepresented groups. I provide evidence of longstanding cultural inadequacies within the field of psychology and show how they influence and are influenced by biased norms. I then show how these norms devalue particular research methods and can contribute to erroneous literature in view of construct validation concerns. I conclude with a case that demonstrates the problems I have laid out, followed by some suggestions for attenuating them.

I. Introduction

Historically, within psychological epistemic environments culture and cultural differences have been misrepresented. This misrepresentation occurs partly due to an overabundance of dominant group knowers within the field, knowers who do not have the

necessary tools for adequately representing marginalized group experiences. Also, within psychological epistemic environments, there lies institutional pressure to publish one's research. This pressure facilitates credibility-based social hierarchies that bestow social and occupational awards, such as notoriety and prestige. These rewards work in the researcher's favor: their papers become cited more, and as their papers are cited more, they gain more notoriety and are more likely to be published, working in a cyclical fashion.¹

Within these environments, credibility is a commodity. In turn, credibility valences are attributable to preferred methodologies that result from the epistemic consensus. These credibility valences create credibility deficits and credibility excesses. These phenomena belong to a special type of injustice, testimonial injustice, defined by the lack of merit attributed to the speaker within a particular epistemic community.² I argue that these credibility valences intersect with cultural and methodological biases such that, on the one hand, quantitative methods may confer credibility excesses to those who employ them by virtue of their hegemonic appeal, while on the other hand, qualitative methods may confer credibility deficits by virtue of this same appeal coupled with issues that surround their lack of conceptual structure. I also argue that epistemic marginalization of qualitative research within the field leads to hermeneutical marginalization of underrepresented groups.

I begin with a brief overview of the psychological literature, noting longstanding biases and cultural-sensitivity concerns. I show how the negative portrayal of marginalized-group characteristics has sewn distrust within these communities. In doing so, I provide empirical evidence of cultural biases and subsequent erroneous, prejudiced interpretations by dominant-group members.

I then discuss methodology preferences, highlighting how one particular methodology relies heavily on subjective first-person experiences. I continue by outlining current conceptions of quantitative and qualitative psychology research methods, highlighting

¹ Felipe Romero, "Philosophy of Science and the Replicability Crisis," *Philosophy Compass* 14, no. 11 (2019): e12633, <https://doi-org/10.1111/phc3.12633>.

² Rachel McKinnon, "Epistemic Injustice," *Philosophy Compass* 11, no. 8 (2016): 437–446.

their various strengths and weaknesses. I then follow with conceptual concerns, providing examples of methods that are construed as quantitative but share similarities with qualitative methods and showing how the distinction can become opaque vis-à-vis construct validation concerns. I continue with an analysis of construct validity, one that leads into an argument centered around conceptual structural asymmetries between qualitative and quantitative methods broadly defined. I argue that these structural asymmetries intersect with biased attitudes toward methodology choice and create an inequitable epistemic environment that devalues qualitative methods. I argue that this epistemic devaluing occurs at two levels: methodological devaluing undermines the credibility of those who employ qualitative methods and obfuscates richer, more progressive empirical research.

I then call back to concerns around construct validity and attempt to show how the evaluative prowess of quantitative measures is contingent on proper variable rendering and measurement tool application in turn. I highlight cases that claim to have adequate construct validity showing how and where they fall short. In doing so, I consider and respond to an objection that says qualitative methods cannot serve as adequate evaluative tools in view of issues surrounding the subjective nature of certain constructs and methods related to said construct. I propose that qualitative methods are a way of disconfirming currently accepted, presumedly valid, quantitative methods such as self-reports, affirming their evaluative role.

I end with a case study that elucidates a fundamental problem with the exclusive reliance on self-report measures as adequate measurement tools when assessing independent groups of different cultures.³ I argue for their inadequacy in assessing certain socio-political constructs in view of research on cultural biases in line with power dynamics that lead to testimonial injustices leaving under-represented researchers liable to hermeneutical marginalization. The testimonial smothering of these groups contributes to the paradoxical inability to verify, or account for, cultural distinction between constructs. I conclude with considerations for raising nationwide culturally sensitive IRB protocols, reasoning that they may help

³ Joel Michell, "The Quantitative Imperative," *Theory & Psychology* 13, no. 1 (2003): 5–31.

alleviate some of the quantitative methodology bias, while also serving to make salient the need for cultural consciousness in view of arguments surrounding hermeneutical marginalization.

II. Culture and Cultural Difference

Historically, within psychological epistemic environments, culture and cultural differences have been misrepresented.⁴ Throughout this paper, epistemic environments refers to a social network of experts who contribute to and facilitate knowledge production within their respective field. The misrepresentation of culture and cultural differences in epistemic environments occurs partly due to an oversaturation of knowers within the field who do not have the necessary tools for adequately representing the experiences of marginalized groups. The result of this oversaturation is that dominant groups are left in a position to unfairly impose their expectations for marginalized groups in the scientific literature. Research tells us that there is a higher likelihood of those who ascribe to collectivist culture to report more socially desirable answers in self-reports.⁵ Because of this imposition, psychological studies on marginalized groups are often rife with error, and thus, the data collected and interpreted by outgroup members follows suit.

Psychological epistemic environments also marginalize certain methodologies, particularly, qualitative methods.⁶ These errors often overlap and create problems for psychological construct validity, and methodology choice.⁷ In Psychology, a construct refers to a phenomenon that a study is attempting to measure, conduct tests on,

⁴ José M., Causadias, Joseph A. Vitriol, and Annabelle L. Atkin, “The Cultural (Mis)Attribution Bias in Developmental Psychology in the United States,” *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology* 59 (November 2018): 65–74.

⁵ Ashok K. Lalwani,, Sharon Shavitt, and Timothy Johnson, “What Is the Relation between Cultural Orientation and Socially Desirable Responding?” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 90, no. 1 (2006): 165–178.

⁶ Michell, “The Quantitative Imperative.”

⁷ Caroline Stone, “A Defense and Definition of Construct Validity in Psychology,” *Philosophy of Science* 86, no. 5 (December 2019): 1250–1261, <https://doi.org/10.1086/705567>.

or derive new information from. In turn, construct validity refers to the degree to which a study accurately measures and assesses said phenomena relative to the derived data. There are distinct methodologies that aim to achieve this goal, and as such, distinct methods aim to achieve their corresponding research aims. Quantitative methods, broadly construed, aim to test theories, hypotheses, and whether constructs are being accurately measured, evidenced by statistically derived data. Whereas, qualitative measures, broadly construed, can be used as exploratory tools for data-rich repositories or, on my view, as construct assessment tools.⁸

Currently, there is consensus around the criterion that designates methods and measures as quantitative in nature, though the same cannot be said for its qualitative counterpart. Quantitative methods assume a spot at the top of the methodological hierarchy⁹, owing to and often contributing to a culture of publication bias.¹⁰ Because qualitative methods are seen as exploratory tools as opposed to confirmatory ones, like quantitative methods, they are often scrutinized and used less. However, we need qualitative research to ascertain certain truths, particularly, truths that fall in line with the phenomenology of marginalized groups. Because these group experiences are constrained to phenomenological reports, rendering them subjective, it is then that much harder for outside group members to understand and accurately convey marginalized group experiences. If researchers are already disincentivized to do qualitative research in view of methodological hierarchies and conceptual disagreements; qualitative research, then, relies on information from members of underrepresented groups. Consequently, the

⁸ Kaya Yilmaz, "Comparison of Quantitative and Qualitative Research Traditions: Epistemological, Theoretical, and Methodological Differences," *European Journal of Education* 48, no. 2 (June 8, 2013): 311–325.

⁹ Brendan Gough and Antonia Lyons, "The Future of Qualitative Research in Psychology: Accentuating the Positive," *Integrative Psychological and Behavioral Science* 50, no. 2 (June 2016): 234–43, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12124-015-9320-8>.

¹⁰ Lauren J. Breen and Dawn Darlaston-Jones, "Moving Beyond the Enduring Dominance of Positivism in Psychological Research: Implications for Psychology in Australia," *Australian Psychologist* 45, no. 1 (2010): 67–76, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00050060903127481>.

marginalization of qualitative research within the field, I argue, leads to hermeneutical marginalization of underrepresented groups and these injustices infringe on the progression of psychological research. This notion is supported by the development of multi-cultural psychology as the fourth paradigmatic force in psychology.¹¹

III. Quantitative and Qualitative Methods

Quantitative research and methodology stem from the positivist paradigm, a scientific paradigm that posits the ability to measure data as a necessary condition for justifiable scientific practice.¹² The logic of this paradigm revolves around the scientific process of justifying theory by means of observable, measurable data points.¹³ With that, quantitative methods generally serve as theory affirmation tools. That is, they serve as early steps in data-driven explanatory or predictive prowess, aiding in a study's construct measurement, relative to theoretical paradigms. Quantitative measures often rely on computational scales, such as composite Likert-scale survey scores intended to measure quantitative variables such as anxiety levels. Likert scales are measurement tools that rely on values ranging from low to high with the aim of assessing constructs in a self-reported fashion. They are often represented with a question followed by items that are quantified via numbers ranging from one to five with one representing the lower value of someone's answer to the question, having a numerical value of zero, with five having a value of five or more.

Qualitative research methods, however, are some of the oldest methods for generating data, calling back to the days of founding fathers of the discipline like William James. Historically, qualitative research stems from the inductivist paradigm, which posits sufficiently large numbers of observations for deriving laws of nature,

¹¹ Patricia Arredondo and Zoila G. Tovar-Blank, "Multicultural Competencies: A Dynamic Paradigm for the 21st Century," in *APA Handbook of Multicultural Psychology, Vol. 2: Applications and Training* (American Psychological Association, 2014), 19–34.

¹² Michell, "The Quantitative Imperative." .

¹³ Yilmaz, "Comparison."

encompassing theories as well.¹⁴ Succinctly, the central problem around the inductivist paradigm, and qualitative research in turn, are observational ambiguity relative to a particular theory and that qualitative differences in perception are confined to the phenomenology of certain perceivers or groups of perceivers. If this is the case, then it seems difficult to properly evaluate constructs and theory without consensus around the correct interpretation of data. The positivist on the other hand, comes to scientific conclusions by way of ruling out. That is, when given a set of variables in view of phenomena of interest, the positivist aims to arrive at causality by way of ruling out variables until they are left with one or some variables out of the previous set. The one or some is said to be the only logical explanation for the phenomena in question, in line with the theoretical paradigm (Breen and Darlaston-Jones).¹⁵

A few problems arise out of the inductivist and positivist paradigms, and it is important to note these shortcomings if we are to appreciate the value of qualitative research. First, exactly how many specific cases are needed to prove sufficient for a phenomenon in question's generalizability? Furthermore, how many cases would be needed to confirm a state of affairs as pertinent to a particular theory? For example, from an inductivist perspective, if I claim to have found undeniable empirical evidence that all cats in my neighborhood are tabbies because every cat I have seen thus far is a tabby, and I have seen upwards of twenty cats over the last six months, then I might say that the area in question only produces tabbies. It's easy to see that this claim is rife with flawed reasoning, for how could I justifiably claim those instances as sufficient evidence to deduce my living space as one that only produces tabbies? It's clearly possible that I have not looked hard enough for other species of cats, or that I am failing to distinguish between what I think is a tabby and another species, or that I simply haven't seen enough cats to rule out the possibility of there being another species. The point is that those observations alone, absent of careful, structured testing and hypothesis, do not suffice for scientific practice. As such, qualitative research is currently construed as an

¹⁴ Irving Rothchild, "Induction, Deduction, and the Scientific Method," (The Society for the Study of Reproduction, 2006).

¹⁵ Breen and Darlaston-Jones, "Moving Beyond."

exploratory method, one that fleshes out known constructs and asks associated novel questions, though being incongruent with the realm of testing.

IV. Conceptual Asymmetries and Outcomes

I'd like to revisit the nature of quantitative and qualitative methods to discuss their agreed-upon criteria and fundamental structural distinctions. One notable distinction between quantitative and qualitative methods lies in their conceptual structure. Quantitative methods are constituted by strict parameters along with distinguished, specific, sub- methodologies. For example, when assessing differences in intelligence quantitatively, one might design, or utilize a previously designed, survey with Likert-scale items intended to be summed, averaged, and compared to another subject's score. It is important to understand that this is one sub-methodology of quantitative research, one that experts in the field take to be a standard. The salient point is that of standardization. The standard lets others in the field perform replications of the study as a means of assessing said study's theoretical basis along with construct validity. With that, these parameters and distinctions are followed by a consensus among researchers and practitioners alike.

This consensus, however, is not shared within the qualitative domain, despite some of their overlapping similarity. Here I argue that these structural asymmetries, along with epistemic norms and their associated social outcomes, result in preferences and epistemic biases that co-occur with a misguided methodological realism attached to quantitative methods. This co-occurrence aids in conferring a credibility excess to researchers in the field that employ these methods, and this credibility excess increases the likelihood that a researcher's paper will be cited and that those citations follow the same trend.¹⁶ The resulting feedback loop, along with these biased attitudes, renders qualitative methods a frowned-upon methodology choice.

First, quantitative methods make up the bulk of what qualifies psychology as a scientific discipline. The idea being that if data is quantifiable, observable, and as reproducible as possible, there is less room for subjectivity to impede reliable, valid research findings. As

¹⁶ Romero, "Philosophy of Science."

such, quantitative measures often employ scales composed of items intended to assess constructs of interest. For example, on a twelve-item scale intended to assess general anxiety, the construct of interest, would be reduced to a score intended to reflect aspects of said construct or measure levels of the construct itself.¹⁷ Certain items may outweigh others, and the degree to which each item on the scale is related to other items represents the measure's internal consistency, which is indicative of a scale's reliability.¹⁸ Many see elements like these as evidence for the objective nature of quantitative measures, though this claim is often over-stated.

Second, it is important to note the difficulty with developing an adequately structured protocol for qualitative research. There is much less information, in terms of standard practice, on which to draw, which leaves room for flexibility but also for lack of coherent, sound structure. There is also the task of finding the appropriate theoretical framework, if there is one, to guide a qualitative study's aims. Furthermore, when considering the time-constrained atmosphere that surrounds academia, especially Research One institutions where many influential researchers practice, the likelihood of seeing a project through to completion dwindles. Assessing the veracity of a particular qualitative study also becomes difficult as many are almost entirely and almost always context dependent. This subjective characteristic makes it much harder to establish a consensus among researchers regarding the truth value of reported findings. All these factors are considered by researchers when designing a study. The structural coherency and associated methodological consensus quantitative methods enjoy leaves them and their associated projects an overall more desirable, and in terms of career prospects, worthwhile endeavor.

Again, calling back to the positivist notion, quantitative methods are directly reproducible: their veracity can be assessed by anyone with the associated adequate statistical understanding, along with an understanding of the appropriate standard to be employed. Qualitative methods, however, as exploratory methods, aren't reproducible in the same sense. They rely on agreed-upon interpretations of data and have

¹⁷ Stone, "A Defense and Definition."

¹⁸ Yilmaz, "Comparison."

different fundamental aims in most cases. In fact, in some cases, reproducing a qualitative study as a means of assessing its truth value is illogical, as in cases involving people, language, and customs, which all change over time. Many in the field of psychology see this theoretical underpinning as a reason to claim quantitative methods as objective. I, however, argue below that this notion is misguided.

Finally, returning to career prospects, psychological epistemic environments apply institutional pressure to publish one's research. This pressure facilitates credibility-based social hierarchies, ones that bestow social and occupational awards such as notoriety and prestige. These rewards work in the researcher's favor: their papers become cited more, and as their papers are cited more, they gain notoriety and are more likely to be published, working in cyclical fashion.¹⁹ However, the ethics around norms that drive these credibility economies, and the subsequent socio-moral implications, are questionable, to say the least, though a proper assessment of such factors is beyond the scope of this paper.

What is important, however, are the credibility valences attributable to preferred methodologies within the epistemic consensus. These credibility valences are construed as credibility deficits and credibility excesses, terms coined by feminist philosophers like Miranda Fricker. Terms like this belong to a special type of injustice, testimonial injustice, defined by the lack of merit attributed to the speaker within a particular epistemic community.²⁰ In a later section, I argue that these credibility valences intersect with cultural and methodological biases such that, on one hand, quantitative methods may confer credibility excesses to those who employ them by virtue of their hegemonic appeal, while, on the other hand, qualitative methods may confer credibility deficits by virtue of this same appeal, coupled with the perception that their lack of conceptual structure make them much less objective.

V. Questions Concerning Construct Validity

Psychology, as a discipline, is wedded to an objective realist position, the general idea being that psychological research better

¹⁹ Romero, "Philosophy of Science."

²⁰ McKinnon, "Epistemic Injustice."

reflects reality from an objective, quantifiable methodological standpoint.²¹ Objective realism is the idea that a state of affairs can be confirmed to actually exist in reality through objective scientific inquiry. For example, in assessing intelligence, the objective realist says that a subject scores high in intelligence *relative to the standard of intelligence*, which is established in the world. I argue that fluid, varying constructs, such as race, ethnicity, and gender, are incompatible with an objective realist position. But first, I would like to call back to psychological constructs, as a way to illustrate the above point.

Given longstanding worries about replicability, it's easy to see the motivation behind a push for objective methods; however, this push is an overcorrection. This overcorrection, along with other intersecting factors, leaves the field of psychology back at square one, by virtue of an incompatibility between measurement tools and the constructs they attempt to measure.²² I begin with a brief outline of psychological constructs, along with their relationship to theory, and subsequent methodology. I go on to note inconsistencies and overlap between quantitative and qualitative methods keeping their general distinctions in mind. And I end with a call to question the application practices of these methodological tools. In doing so, I argue certain constructs are incompatible with the aims of quantitative measures and transition into a discussion of the distinction between, what Caroline Stone²³ and others call, construct legitimacy and construct validity.

First, a psychological construct is a particular study's central variable of interest.²⁴ The variable represents the intangible phenomenon in question, such as personality or attention span. Because personality and attention span are immaterial things, we must carefully define and represent them in a communicable manner to achieve a makeshift yet palpable agreed-upon understanding of the phenomena in question. To do this, we socially construct it.

²¹ Michell, "The Quantitative Imperative."

²² B. F. Skinner, "Whatever Happened to Psychology as the Science of Behavior?" *American Psychologist* 42, no. 8 (1987): 780–786.

²³ Stone, "A Defense and Definition."

²⁴ Lee J. Cronbach and Paul E. Meehl, "Construct Validity in Psychological Tests," *Psychological Bulletin* 52, no. 4 (1955): 281–302, <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0040957>.

Second, the differences between qualitative and quantitative methods can sometimes be obfuscated. For example, in-home interviews conducted on subjects who are open to discussing sensitive topics, such as racial inequities, can be quantitatively or qualitatively conducted; sometimes both are employed in a mixed- method design. However, when computing subject scores, there must be careful consideration of between-group differences. Often members of specific social groups are averse to discussing problematic topics due to cultural and societal rules. Because of this, it would be improper to quantitatively compare scores between groups when there are qualitative or *categorical* differences present, though possibly unrecognizable by uninformed, outgroup, or dominant group members. Furthermore, a language barrier may foster difficulty in understanding between researcher and subject, and this could lead to further problems with interpretation. Consequently, dominant group members and members of underrepresented ethnic groups fail to agree on interpretations.

The lack of recognition of this difference leaves underrepresented group members in a catch-twenty-two, or a paradoxical double bind. Owing to longstanding biased institutional norms, members of underrepresented groups find it difficult to integrate into certain psychological fields, hence being *underrepresented*. And members of underrepresented groups who aim to take part in culturally-sensitive qualitative research are denied the tools and support they need, remaining marginalized in the discipline. Dominant group members inadvertently ostracize members of underrepresented groups by virtue of this marginalization. Miranda Fricker identifies the epistemic aspect of this type of marginalization, what she calls hermeneutical marginalization. Hermeneutical marginalization involves the unjust blocking of knowledge transference, including development, acquisition, communication, and contribution experienced by members of marginalized groups.²⁵ Hermeneutical marginalization undermines the progression of psychological research by continuing to marginalize certain groups and by neglecting potential avenues for novel findings. As long as this barrier is in place, the field of psychology will continue to

²⁵ McKinnon, "Epistemic Injustice."

produce deficient research, research that strays from holistic depictions of reality. In the next section I aim to show how marginalization is connected to qualitative methods and construct validity.

VI. Assessing Construct Legitimacy

Construct validity is currently understood as the degree to which a given measure accurately measures what it is intended to measure, namely the construct. Often in Psychology, constructs are referred to by the tools that measure them. A common instrument for measuring personality in Psychology is the well-known Big-Five scale, a personality model that measures scores on key personality traits, such as Neuroticism and Agreeableness, often represented as ‘OCEAN.’²⁶ So we might ask whether the Big-Five scale is measuring human behavior or an aspect of human behavior, like violence, within an aggressive person.

Caroline Stone uses this opaque conceptualization of psychological constructs as a reason to motivate a need to distinguish between construct validity and construct legitimacy.²⁷ According to Stone, construct validity refers to aspects of the measure relative to a construct.²⁸ For example, a thermometer doesn’t directly measure temperature; rather, the fluid within the thermometer correlates with temperature. Construct legitimacy, on the other hand, is intended to represent an aspect of the construct itself: the significant distinctions being made apparent at the conceptual level in view of construct legitimacy’s required accordance with theory. Put simply, Stone argues that construct legitimacy is contingent on its fit with theory, and thus, it becomes difficult to ascertain the veracity of a given construct if the theoretical basis isn’t empirically informed.²⁹

²⁶ Imran Ali, “Personality Traits, Individual Innovativeness and Satisfaction with Life,” *Journal of Innovation & Knowledge* 4, no. 1 (January 1, 2019): 38–46, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jik.2017.11.002>.

²⁷ Stone, “A Defense and Definition.”

²⁸ Stone, “A Defense and Definition,” 1253.

²⁹ Stone, “A Defense and Definition.”

Theory and the subsequent construct being tied together has a profound influence on methodology. To comprehend how this pairing influences methodology, we must first understand how some measure's methodological categories are viewpoint dependent. By this I mean, the category they belong to is contingent on the study's aims in conjunction with background knowledge about the topic of interest. To understand this, we have to look toward an example of self-report measures, calling back to how quantitative and qualitative methods are distinguished. As I mentioned earlier, self-reports, sometimes taking the form of in-home interviews, can be conducted either qualitatively or quantitatively, which can obfuscate proper application of these methods.

A self-report measure, like a scale intended to measure a construct like supportive parenting, can be quantitative *if* employed properly. An example of an adequate scale for this task would have to draw from a legitimate index that can be applied across groups or one that intends to measure a specific group's supportive parenting levels. In other words, these scales can be applied either across groups or within groups. Some constructs such as attention span can sometimes be applied across and within groups; however, culturally-sensitive constructs like supportive parenting do not share in the former's flexibility. Different cultures parent differently and may understand the questions from a self-report interview about parenting differently. Research shows that there are major differences in parenting, particularly when African American styles are compared with Caucasians.³⁰ Lack of attention to this potential problem ignores the possibility of—and even portends—a hermeneutical gap forming. A hermeneutical gap refers to the disconnect between members of marginalized groups and dominant group member's understanding of shared concepts, knowledge, and data repositories. This gap contributes to the marginalization of certain groups by undermining their credibility, that is, conferring credibility deficits. This type of epistemic injustice—hermeneutical injustice—intersects with the

³⁰ Alexandria Saulsberry et al., "Skills and Strategies of African American Parents in the Management of ADHD: A Qualitative Study," *Journal of Attention Disorders* 24, no. 13 (2017): 1867–75, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1087054717727351>.

methodological hierarchy; leaving qualitative methods, and the respective group members who employ them, devalued.

VII. Conclusion

In this final section, I provide a protentional solution to this problem along with a suggestion for future direction. I have discussed how cultural biases and methodology choice within psychological epistemic environments intersect and can lead to the marginalization of underrepresented cultural groups. I have argued that, on one hand, a lack of specific protocol for conducting qualitative research leaves the prospective study's design more daunting in view of anticipated structural difficulties, and, on the other, the attitudes that co-occur render these studies devalued. I have also brought attention to the epistemic consensus that facilitates negative attitudes toward qualitative methods, undermining the credibility of those who employ them. I have made a case for stringent, clearer borders concerning qualitative methodology criteria, including more rigorous evaluation and subsequent application of construct-assessment methods. For example, in considering an itemized survey construed as a measure of supportive parenting, we can look toward qualitative methods as possible ways of assessing the veracity of previously accepted data. We can do this by carefully structuring qualitative interviews to include competent multicultural knowers.

Problems surrounding construct legitimacy can be accounted for and ameliorated by utilizing well-structured qualitative research. While it is the case that qualitative methods are adequate exploratory tools, they also prove to disconfirm current erroneous cultural constructs. As such, qualitative methods can be used to disconfirm currently-accepted and erroneous theoretical constructs by appealing to the phenomenology of the groups that legitimize these constructs. Calling back to the positivist paradigm, the disconfirming prowess or *qualitative falsification*, is clear when given a set of culturally sensitive constructs, like supportive parenting.

Critics of this view maintain that it is impossible to accurately measure and represent qualitative differences in perception without an objective standard to reference; thus, attempts at achieving consensus are slim. This view, however, is misguided and confused by the term *measured*: what these critics mean is measured quantitatively, often

taken to be the only way to objectively measure constructs. Critics reason that because there is an inability to reach a collective shared perception when discussing constructs such as race and ethnicity, it is entirely possible that one group's perception differs from another group's; with that, it's difficult to obtain consensus around the correct interpretation of these constructs and, consequently, what is taken to be an objective measure. Thus, it's more likely for the dominant group's shared conception of these constructs to be accepted, despite its erroneous nature.

One way of combatting this problem is to change how we view qualitative research, specifically their overarching aims. By this I mean, if we look toward developing qualitative methods that aim to affirm or disconfirm culturally-sensitive constructs, then we may inch closer toward a more holistic, secure knowledge base. As I mentioned before, truth values regarding culturally-sensitive constructs are subject to becoming lost between groups, people, or groups of people, struggling to accurately interpret their observations and experiences. This is the main reason that some cite as a barrier for using qualitative methods in this way. But empirical evidence supports the view that qualitative methods can be used to assess theoretical constructs. Qualitative data from a study on African-American-community perspectives on ADHD diagnoses shows how the collective conception, or misconception, of mental illness, can be shared within a cultural community, despite views not being shared by members of dominant groups. These differences in understanding yield real life consequences and need to be accounted for by persons with the appropriate cultural competence, many being researchers that come from these cultural groups.³¹ My point isn't to say that membership in a cultural group automatically bestows the necessary skills for adequate construct assessment; rather, I hope to show one way the gap in understanding can progressively shrink. I see this as a better solution than writing off a group's shared perception of a state of affairs in favor of the perception accepted by a dominant outgroup, one often

³¹ Omolara Olaniyan et al., "Community Perspectives of Childhood Behavioral Problems and ADHD among African American Parents," *Ambulatory Pediatrics* 7, no. 3 (May 2007): 226–31, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ambp.2007.02.002>.

conceived from the armchair.

On that note, I would like to conclude by proposing a structural solution for some of the problems I have laid out, namely, universal culturally-sensitive Institutional Review Board (IRB) protocols. Currently, the content of IRB criteria varies from institution to institution, which leads to wide variation in the type of studies that are approved or denied. As I mentioned earlier, publication of research confers credibility and other social rewards, also bolstering an author's likelihood of being cited. Publication norms and the quality of the structural practices that decide whether research is accepted or not matters, arguably quite a bit. It is important that certain, if not all, research projects are evaluated from the appropriate cultural lens and sensitive to cultural differences in communication, understanding, and associated construct validity or legitimacy. One way of implementing this is by developing universal, homogeneous IRB protocols from state to state that appropriately account for cultural difference. With nationwide culturally-sensitive IRB consensus, we may be able to inch closer toward a shared understanding, acceptance, and proper acknowledgment of marginalized-group-member contributions to their respective epistemic environments. Furthermore, if psychology is to be taken seriously as a discipline that aims at uncovering deterministic laws of human behavior, then it cannot continue to ignore culture and the impact cultural differences has on the discipline's epistemology. This neglect contributes to hermeneutical marginalization and allows for the continued unjust treatment of members of underrepresented groups, as well as the asymmetrical, devalued positioning of qualitative methods.

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