

Community Development Research: Emerging concepts, methods and practices

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The application of social research in Community Development (CD) provides deeper meanings to action research, participatory research, and development research. Although these constructs emerged at different historical periods, their common thread weaves through three major themes – participatory methods, people’s action, and social transformation.

This paper aims to define development research in general and CD research in particular, as it has evolved over the years, using the theses and faculty researches as primary sources of data. The paper has the following sections: first is a summary of CD research done by the faculty and students at UP-CSWCD; second is a reflection on these researches identifying the nature of CD research; and the last section contains the good practices as well as the challenges faced by CD researchers.

These researches form part of CSWCD’s community-engaged scholarship, also called transformative scholarship, where the long-term perspective of academic pursuit is societal change and people’s empowerment. Moreover, the following characteristics are evident in these researches: the standpoint for the poor, marginalized, and disempowered communities; interdisciplinary and integrative approaches grounded on theorizing; and production of knowledge products that contribute to both individual and collective scholarship of CSWCD and the University to serve the people.

Introduction

Social research practice in recent years deals with various development concerns: from individual perceptions and behaviors to social issues and movements. Social research is neither monolithic nor static. It aims to create more spaces for discovery and learning. It is trans-disciplinary and dynamic. Social research concepts, methods, and practices continue to evolve in response to the changing needs of its different ‘publics.’

The application of social research in Community Development (CD) provides deeper meaning to alternative labels such as action research, participatory research, and development research. Although these constructs emerged at different historical periods, their common thread weaves through three major themes – participatory methods, people's action and social transformation.

Action research is a major category in social research that highlights the problem-solving function of research (Castillo, 1972, cited in Torres, 1987). It involves a complex process of observation-reflection-action to seek solutions to practical issues (Stringer, 2007). The 'action' component is commonly associated with group action and social change.

Participatory research evolved from non-conventional research practices in developing countries. It is closely linked with popular knowledge (Hall, 1983), social action (Guerrero, 1984), and community organizing (Torres, 1987). Participatory research has three major components: Conscientization (awareness building), Capacity building (group learning), and Action (towards social change). It seeks to create wider opportunities for grassroots participation in the development process in general, and in knowledge production in particular (Ibon, 2004).

Development research is a relatively new label associated with interdisciplinary research perspectives that aim to respond to development issues that affect poor countries and sectors (Desai & Potter, 2006; Laws, 2003, 2013). It is grounded on cultural and gender sensitivity, participatory approaches, field-based inquiry, and blended methodology.

This paper aims to define development research in general and community development research in particular, as it has evolved over the years, using theses and faculty research studies as primary sources of data. The paper has the following sections: the first is a summary of CD research in the College of Social Work and Community Development (CSWCD) done by faculty and students; the second is a reflection on these research studies identifying the nature of CD research; and the last section contains the good practices as well as the challenges faced by CD researchers.

CD research in CSWCD

What has been the practice of CD research by CD faculty and students in the past 15 years (2000 – 2015)? A review of the research conducted at CSWCD was undertaken, with the sources of data being the various theses

produced by graduate students as well as the studies undertaken by the faculty. This section will present a summary of research topics, research methodologies and data gathering methods, recommendations from the research studies, forms of research dissemination as well as usage of research results.

Summary of CD Theses Topics

During the period of 2000-2015, a total of 46 theses were produced by graduates of the Master of Community Development under the CSWCD's Department of Community Development. The topics covered can be categorized as follows:

1. Exploration of CD concepts and processes such as participatory planning, community organizing, community education, project sustainability, community governance, organizational diagnosis, community resilience, and gender-responsive program management;
2. Exploration and/or evaluation of community development programs such as community-based coastal resource management, community livelihood programs, housing cooperatives, community reintegration programs, microfinance, community mortgage programs, disaster risk reduction and management programs, environmental protection, and community literacy;
3. Case studies of community/sectoral empowerment programs focused on women, older persons, children, farmers, fishers, urban poor, youth, indigenous peoples, and persons with disabilities;
4. Specific applications of tools for CD, such as geographic information system (GIS) in participatory planning, spirituality in CD, tools for organizational diagnosis, and product diversification; and,
5. Impacts of programs or events such as resettlement, red tide disaster, and neo-globalization on marginalized sectors.

Selection of thesis topics. Some graduate students got their inspiration for their thesis topics from some CD faculty who were active in their research and extension work. Examples are the following:

1. Prof. Sylvia M. Guerrero was involved in her advocacy in the area of environmental protection specifically for projects to acquire environmental

certificate compliance (ECCs). She was the adviser of Ms. Belen Banzon (2000) who did her thesis on “Revisiting the resettlement communities of the National Power Corporation”.

2. Prof. Angelito G. Manalili has always been involved in organizing and capacity building programs among urban and rural poor populations. This advocacy is also reflected as he mentored Mr. Froilan Alipao (2002) in his thesis “*Ang muli’t muling paghango: Mga kasalukuyang tahakin sa pagpapaunlad ng kanayunan (Pag-aaral sa larangan ng tatlong pamayanan)*” and Mr. Wilfredo Awitan (2009) in his thesis “*Pintang Bata, Pag-oorganisa at Pakikilahok: Mga Batang Pintor sa Baliwag, Bulakan*”.
3. Prof. Ma. Theresa V. Tungpalan is active in her advocacy for women’s empowerment and this was likewise reflected as she mentored Ms. Emilie Toldoya (2001) in her thesis “Women as entrepreneurs: Focus on the participation of women in Bacong Women Abaca Development Association, Brgy. Lutao, Bacong, Negros Oriental” and Ms. Luz Victoria Amponin (2003) in her thesis “Critical factors for enhancing reintegration program for returning Filipino women entertainers”.
4. Prof. Ma. Linnea V. Tanchuling’s interest on gender issues helped Sr. Odelia Bulayungan (2007) as she did her thesis on “Translating women energies into empowering revelations: A participatory evaluative case study on San Benito SIPAG-KO’s community based child care program and CBS-Marihatag’s capability building program” and Ms. Melissa Calingo (2007) as she did her thesis on “Unleashing women power: a participatory evaluative case study on MAKAPAWA’s community-based health program”.
5. Prof. Ma. Corazon J. Tan is an advocate for sustainable agriculture. As such, she is involved with people’s organizations and non-government organizations engaged in these types of programs. She mentored Mr. Rimando Felicia (2011) when he did his thesis “*Dagyaw: Pagsusuri at paglilinang ng mga samahang magsasaka ng MASIPAG, Visayas – dokumentasyon, talakayan, rekomendasyon*” among the farmer members of MASIPAG.
6. Prof. Emmanuel M. Luna’s advocacy is in the field of disaster risk reduction and management having done many research studies and publications in this topic. He mentored Sr. Fe Rosalie Mangarin

(2013) as she did her thesis on “Faith-based Organizing Processes and Strategies in a Disaster Affected Community: The Case of Brgy. Pinaglapatan, Infanta”. Prof. Luna likewise had a research on early warning systems also in Infanta, Quezon.

While the above students followed the research and extension work of their advisers, there were other students whose thesis topics came from their own community development practice. Some of these are the following:

1. Mr. Angelito Meneses (2002) was engaged in CD programs with urban poor population as he did his thesis “*Sitio Mendez: Kapirasong Lupa, Paraisong Lupa (Kwento ng Buhay at Pakikibaka ng Maralitang Lungsod)*”.
2. Mr. Efren Lubuguin’s thesis (2004) “Sa loob ng klasrum, sa labas ng paaralan: pagdalumat ng pangaraw-araw ng edukasyong pagkamamamayan sa hanay ng kabataan” was a pioneering work on community education among young people.
3. Ms. Ma. Veronica Hernando (2008) was involved with a non-government organization implementing CD programs with Ayta communities when she did her thesis “Indigenous People’s Development Process: A Mirror of Ayta Way of Life and Experiences, *Biyay Palako ha Dinanan Boy ang Kitang ay yay Biyay*”.
4. Mr. Ernesto Anasarias (2008) was involved in community based peace programs as he did his thesis on “Children as Zone of Peace: Child-centered organizing and development in conflict-affected communities in Pikit, North Cotabato”.
5. Ms. Jenny Villena (2012) was working with the Armed Forces of the Philippines which became the locale of her thesis “Negotiating Convergence between CD and Military Perspectives”.
6. Mr. Simon Fankhauser (2012) was working with the urban poor sector which was experiencing demolitions as he did his thesis “Weaving Spirituality, Social Action and Relocation: Voices of Two Urban Poor Faith-Based Organizations Faced With Eviction and Relocation”.

Research methodologies. Most of the theses made use of qualitative research methodologies such as descriptive case studies,

participatory program evaluation, participatory action research, process documentation, ethnography, and organizational diagnosis. They used the following data gathering methods: key informant interviews; workshops; focus group discussions; life stories; ocular survey; participant observation; story telling; and documents review. Many of the theses entailed living in the research sites, mostly in communities in Luzon. A few were done outside Luzon, such as in Pikit, North Cotabato (Anasarias, 2008); Tacloban, Leyte (Calingo, 2007) and Western Subanon in Zamboanga (Awid, 2008). Ms. Amarech Dale (2002) went back to Ethiopia to do her study on violence against women. Hence, community integration was integral and important in the thesis writers' research methods.

Only four out of the 46 theses made use of combined qualitative and quantitative research methodologies, namely: Ms. Roseller Bastillada (2002) whose thesis "The 'State-Market-Civil Society' and inter-local government monetary collaboration system for CD" reviewed actual annual tax collections; Mr. Daisuke Okamura (2003) whose thesis "The impact of a microfinance program on women's empowerment: A case study of the TSPI Kabuhayan Program" used quantitative survey methods; Ms. Bishnu Regmi (2006) whose thesis "Microfinance as a strategy for poverty reduction and partner empowerment: The CCT experience in urban poor communities in Metro Manila" used quantitative methods to compare results of poverty reduction in two urban poor communities; and Ms. Lea Deriquito (2009) whose thesis "Myth or Reality? Understanding the Concept and Nature of Sustainability and the factors affecting it" produced a scale to measure sustainability of projects.

Dissemination and usage of research results. The graduate students disseminated their research results through oral presentations in conferences and research fora and through publications in journals or monographs. Journal articles from the thesis of Hernando (2008) and Awid (2008) were included in the monograph "Rooted to Land: Strengthening Indigenous Peoples Community Processes" (Bawagan, Hernando & Awid, 2009). Anasarias (2008) and Awitan (2009) likewise wrote journal articles for the monograph "Building Children's Spaces (Reflections on Children Organizing for Peace and Development)" (Tungpalan, Awitan, Anasarias & Ferrer, 2010). Ms. Diane Bernardo (2012) presented her thesis during the 2nd Asia Pacific Regional Conference on Community Development held in October 2012 in Los Baños, Laguna and in another international conference.

Aside from presentations in conferences and other research fora, two research outputs were presented in the communities where the study was conducted as a way to bring back the research results to the research partners. These were the thesis of Froilan Alipao (2002), and that of Angelito Meneses (2002). The community presentation became a learning experience for the research participants and for the community in general.

While not all research results may have been published or presented in research fora or conferences, the theses are generally used as reference materials in the syllabi for both undergraduate and graduate classes of CD faculty members. Some of them are also used in the literature review of research students.

Findings and recommendations from the theses. Generally, the theses produced in the past 15 years showed various forms of implementation of community development programs on the ground in different contexts and with different sectors. Moreover, these depicted how congruence of different actors such as community people's organizations (POs), non-government organizations (NGOs), and government agencies synergizes community development towards strengthening grassroots people's commitment to social change and achievement of their development agenda.

Some theses described in vivid detail processes of community empowerment such as organizing, education, planning and project implementation, and resource management in urban and rural communities. Particular steps of these processes were manifested in programs with children and youth, women, persons with disabilities, farmers, and fishers.

Where failures of some projects were recounted in the theses, the researchers recommend stronger collaboration among project partners. Such will enhance participation of community stakeholders and highlight their active ownership of the project rather than being passive beneficiaries. Others advocated for critical awareness and understanding by government agencies of the importance of participation in community-based development programs to implement the bottom-up perspective rather than the traditional top-down approach. These were evident in the studies regarding government projects in low-cost housing, energy development, and environmental protection.

Summary of Faculty Research Studies

Faculty members of the Department of Community Development generate their research topics from realities on the ground, from their advocacies, from their professional networks, and from their own practice. The research agenda of the College likewise guides the selection of research topics. The CSWCD strategic plan from 2008 – 2017 identified four major research clusters, namely disaster risk reduction and management (DRRM), social protection, migration, and peace and governance. These were based on areas of concern which faculty members have taken on for their research, as well as areas where the college wishes to contribute in terms of knowledge generation and curriculum development.

For the past 15 years, the faculty have engaged in a broad range of research studies, such as the following:

1. *Community resource management (CRM) and community-based coastal resource management (CBCRM)*

The various researches under CRM and CBCRM include the following: the situation of fisherfolk and their coastal resources and organizing (Formilleza, 2003); sustainable livelihoods in coastal communities; management of fisheries and coastal resources (Polotan-dela Cruz & Ferrer, 2003); production patterns; conflicts in use of fishing gear; protection and rehabilitation programs such as marine protected areas, mangrove reforestation, and artificial reefs; community property rights and sea ranching of cucumbers, and women and aquaculture (Tanchuling, 2008 & 2009); and sustainable community forestry (Tan, 2008). Inherent in these research studies is the organization, capacity building, and participation of fisherfolk and farmer organizations.

Realizing that there is still a wealth of topics that may be pursued along this line, as well as the importance of community resources management in general and coastal resource management in particular, the DCD has included this subject as a major course in both its undergraduate and graduate programs.

2. *Community-based Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (CBDRRM)*

Research in this field flourished in the past 15 years, as NGOs and academic institutions embarked on a strong advocacy for the adoption of a pro-active disaster risk reduction and management perspective as opposed

to a very reactive disaster response approach. The Hyogo Framework of Action for the period 2005-2015 also spurred action research to develop the people's capacities to analyze community risks and hazards and to prepare for the mitigation of these.

Faculty members who were interested in this topic conducted research on the following topics: participatory capacities and vulnerabilities assessment (PCVA); identifying impacts of hazards on communities, especially strong typhoons (e.g., Ondoy, Sendong and Yolanda) and earthquakes (e.g., Bohol) and disaster recovery planning (Luna, Obedicen & Quilicol, 2014; Polotan-dela Cruz, et al, 2013); building disaster resilient communities (Dela Cruz, Ferrer & Pagaduan, 2010); participatory review of typhoon rehabilitation programs; integration of climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction by local government units (Felizco, 2014); and, resilience of small islands and coastal communities (Hiwasaki, Luna, & Syamsidik, 2015).

Due to the high vulnerability of the Philippines to strong hazards (e.g., earthquakes and typhoons), particularly for marginalized communities, the DCD deemed it important that community development graduates develop sufficient knowledge and skills in this field. Hence, a course on DRRM has been included in the new curricula of both undergraduate and graduate programs.

As with community resource management, CBDRRM has likewise been included as a course in the undergraduate and graduate programs of the Department. This has brought about increased knowledge and awareness among the students on the need for more action research with communities to prepare them for disasters, as well as to plan for disaster response and recovery.

3. Social protection

All of the faculty members of the DCD, are involved in different capacities with at least one marginalized sector—whether as an advocate, community organizer, trainer, or as a member of an NGO working with a specific sector. The social protection theme brought together researches with these sectors. Among the topics that the faculty engaged in were the following: assessment of conditional cash transfer program including its organizational mechanisms (Bañez, 2011); community processes of indigenous communities (Bawagan, Hernando & Awid, 2009); policy reform in the Philippine health regulatory system (Ferrer, 2012); situation of

seafarers (Magcuro, 2010); science and technology for poverty alleviation and women's empowerment (Tan, 2002); organizing children and older persons (Tungpalan, Awitan, Anasarias & Awid, 2010; Tungpalan, 2010); organizing the marginalized (Manalili, 2010); and streamlining and expansion of the socialized tuition fee assistance program of the University of the Philippines-Diliman (Bawagan, Bañez & Adaro, 2012).

4. *Gender*

Gender concerns have been mainstreamed in almost all of the Department's classes on community development. Students are trained to be gender sensitive in their research and community work. Some of the past research studies include the following: gender mainstreaming in national government agencies, local government units and other institutions such as academic institutions, media and credit unions (Torres, 2007); integrating gender perspectives in CBCRM and DRRM (Tanchuling, 2008); women's legal and human rights in addressing violence against women (Pagaduan & WLB, 2010); sexual harassment of female security guards (Pinzon & Rosel, 2003); women in fisheries; and assessment of the Philippine Plan for Gender Responsive Development (Casanova-Dorotan, Anitan, Barrameda, Cabanilla, Tan, & Tanyang, 2010).

While the four themes above comprised the majority of the research, some faculty members engaged in other topics important to their own community development practice, extension work and advocacy. Among these were: the autoregression model of poverty count (Bañez, 2012); culturally relevant pedagogy (Bawagan, 2010); evaluation of community development programs such as those among children, indigenous peoples, older persons, women, and on resource management and DRRM; learning organizations and organizational development (Polotan-dela Cruz, Ferrer, & Vera, 2009); CD and spirituality (Gabo, 2012); biotechnology and biocommerce (Ferrer, 2008); households as epicenter of CD initiatives (Tanchuling, 2010); organizing for community governance (Ferrer, 2006); peacebuilding from below (Manalo, 2014); information and communications technology (Wamil, 2007); and marriage migration (Pagaduan & Panganiban, 2012).

Research methodologies. As was the case with the theses, most of the faculty research employed phenomenological research methodologies, such as multiple case studies, feminist ethnography, and participatory action research. However, in the more recent past, mixed methods research has been employed by the faculty.

The faculty members conducted the research either individually or in small or big groups. The research on building disaster resilient communities (Dela Cruz, Ferrer, & Pagaduan, 2010) was implemented by a team of 11 faculty members. The post-Yolanda research on strengthening institutions for community based disaster risk reduction and management (Bawagan, Polotan-dela Cruz, Felizco, Tan, Wamil, & Germar, 2015) was implemented by a team of five faculty members. While some topics were started by a small group of faculty members, other faculty members later on also joined the group and took on the topic as one of their research interests. As mentioned above, the faculty are not only researchers but are engaged in these issues through their extension work and involvement with NGOs, government organizations or international agencies.

Dissemination and usage of research results. The research results are disseminated through the following modes: public research fora organized by the department, college or institution which sponsored the research; publication in local and international journals, books or monographs; and presentation in local and international conferences. While a number of research studies are submitted as reports to organizations that have contracted the research, faculty members are able to share the results of these studies through their classes or in other fora.

In the past, two faculty members have been able to publish research books and research reference materials, namely Prof. Sylvia H. Guerrero who edited “Feminist Research Experiences” (1998) and “Selected Readings on Health and Feminist Research” (1999) and Prof. Rosario del Rosario who wrote on “Feminist Ethnography” (1992). Within the past 15 years, Prof. Ma. Theresa V. Tungpalan (2005) wrote a Handbook for Researchers and Prof. Emmanuel M. Luna and Prof. Aleli B. Bawagan (2009) wrote a chapter on Community Development Research in a reader on Community Development.

The publications have also become part of the references or reading list of some Community Development courses. The CD curriculum and syllabi of specific courses have likewise been enriched with the use of the research results which provide additional cases relevant to the courses. Research gaps in these fields also become bases for student research or for implementation of class projects.

Reflections from CD research

The scope and challenges of current research practice in Community Development are shaped by the collective reflection of CD practitioners and field researchers over the years.

1. Lessons from conventional research

Current social research practice generally draws from the theory and methods of conventional social research. However, its focus on knowledge generation as the end-goal of research and the tendency of 'experts' to monopolize knowledge generation proved inadequate and inefficient in tackling problems of disempowerment and marginalization of the poor. Its core standards that value logical-empirical evidence, linear relationships of variables, objectivity, and neutrality tend to offer limited analytical tools to better understand and respond to social realities.

2. Development Research - an alternative perspective

Amidst these weaknesses, the search for alternative and more relevant social research perspectives has resulted in various attempts to interrogate, re-define and/or discover new ways of looking at social research beyond the parameters provided by conventional views, which is dominated by Western researchers. It is, however, noted that the term 'development research' was not commonly used by the different writers cited below but their ideas contributed invariably to what can be included in its purview.

The following concepts contribute to the scope and meanings attached to development research:

- *Critical social science*: Research is not merely used to validate standard theories nor to interpret observations. Rather, social research must function as a means to critically view reality and serve as a means to resolve social issues (Neuman, 2003).
- *Feminist research*: Feminist research emphasizes feminist epistemologies in order to re-discover the missing voices of women in knowledge production and reproduction. It brings forward the importance of feminist research methods that are more participatory (McGuire, 1987) and culturally-sensitive (Guerrero, 1998; 1999).

- *Social constructivism* (Laws, 2003, 2013): Social research involves constructing and re-constructing reality based on field data. Social constructivist perspectives value ideas that people themselves generate rather than examining society with pre-determined labels or 'truths'.
- *Field research*: Field research combines a variety of field methods from the different social sciences to better capture the complexities of social life. Hobbs & Wright (2006) argues that 'praxical reasoning' or the use of the action-reflection-action approach in field research is a better alternative to choosing either the deductive or inductive approach to knowledge generation.
- *People-oriented research*: People-oriented research emphasizes the role of people's organizations in generating and analyzing research data. This type of research is embedded in community organizing, mobilization and advocacy that aims to shift the center of authority and power from which knowledge is generated (Tungpalan, 2005).
- *Research for empowerment*: Social research is viewed as a potent tool for marginalized groups to let their voices be heard in the development discourse. The 'empowerment' perspective can be used for program evaluation at the micro level (Fettermen, 2001) or part of the effort towards power sharing at the macro level (Auerback & Silverstein, 2003).
- *Research for community change*: Research is grounded on community needs and issues as basis for capacity building and organized group action (Stoecker, 2013). Research serves as a means toward community participation, local leadership development, action planning, and community development.

3. *What is CD research?*

The concept of Community Development research has evolved through practice. The following characteristics define the parameters of what constitute CD research:

- *Applied critical social science research*

Critical social science research is concerned with social issues affecting marginalized sectors and communities. It intends to deepen one's analysis by utilizing alternative perspectives to explain social realities. It

goes beyond standardized categories and re-examines constructs and labels in the light of empirical evidence from the ground. As applied to community development, social research becomes a tool to interrogate and re-orient ideas as basis for taking action and changing mind-sets.

- *Partisan, transformative, reflective, action-oriented, praxical*

CD research is not neutral. It emanates from a pro-people and pro-poor standpoint. It aims to re-examine social realities as basis for transforming lives and social structures, and to reflect on people's experiences and narratives as basis for community action. Research becomes part of praxical reasoning that merges inductive and deductive thinking approaches.

- *Oriented towards people's empowerment and development*

The goal of CD research is not confined to knowledge generation, but towards contributing to people's well-being. It takes on development issues that push communities and groups to exercise their rights to attain their own development and empowerment.

- *Contributes to the CD body of knowledge (theory and practice)*

CD research must contribute to advancing the theory and practice of CD as an academic discipline. It aims to surface current and local development practices to re-discover and refine concepts and strategies based on praxical reasoning.

- *Can lead to improved development policies, programs, and CD practice*

More than theory building, CD research must be used to make a difference in people's lives by influencing development policies, programs, and practices that can genuinely respond to people's needs and value their capacities.

4. Researchers as activists and learners

CD research challenges researchers to become activists and learners through critical analysis, social learning, and recognizing popular knowledge. Conventional ways of doing social research are viewed as reference points, rather than standard procedures. More important is how research is adapted to the local culture and how the research process and outcomes can be used to attain changes in people's lives.

Research is no longer used merely to explain and discover knowledge. It assumes a higher level function. CD research “can establish modes of resistance, alliances of collaboration, and empower people to write their own lives, or to write accounts that contradict or challenge powerful systems of thoughts” (Fox in Hobbs & Wright, 2006, p. 2).

5. Methodological implications

The research methods used in CD research must be anchored to the principles and values attached to it. The following methodological implications have emerged in recent years:

- ‘Partisan’ research means prioritizing people’s well-being and developmental agenda as research concerns. Pro-poor research is pursued within the parameters set by scientific process and critical perspectives. Methodological rigor is required to influence policy and program advocacy and reforms.
- CD research values culture-based epistemology. It creates spaces for marginalized voices and narratives to be heard (children, indigenous people, older persons, persons with disabilities). The use of feminist research approaches intends to surface gender-based needs and capacities.
- CD research tends to de-mystify dichotomies of conventional research by blending quantitative and qualitative research methods. Triangulation (in terms of using multiple methods in data gathering and analysis) tends to improve research validity.
- ‘Being there’ (primary data gathering in field research) becomes a powerful research method. Context and process variables are viewed as just as important as quantifiable outcomes. Reflexivity is recognized as a valid element that can influence the quality of data gathering and the dynamics between and among the researchers and the research participants.

Moving forward with development research

These CD research studies form part of CSWCD’s community-engaged scholarship, also known as transformative scholarship (CSWCD, 2015) where the intent of scholarship is societal change and empowerment. Moreover, the following characteristics are evident in the research: the standpoint for the poor, marginalized, and disempowered communities;

interdisciplinary and integrative approaches grounded on theorizing, and aimed at both movement building and social action; and development of knowledge products that contribute to both the individual and collective scholarship mandates of CSWCD and the University to serve the people with the expertise of the faculty and students.

As development research continues to evolve, the following specific patterns of good practices should continue to guide and challenge CD researchers:

1. Use of a trans-disciplinary approach that cuts across different disciplines and considers the intersectionality of class, gender and ethnic perspectives as part of the analytical framework;
2. Research as a strategy for capacity building especially among marginalized groups and anchored on community development practice, knowledge, and skills;
3. Ensuring scientific rigor to improve research dependability and application (as differentiated from the definition of validity in Western literature);
4. Theorizing from below and indigenization of concepts; and
5. Accountability of the researcher to the different 'publics'.

Likewise, the CD faculty are continuously challenged to write materials such as books and journal articles on the practice of community development research which can be used as guide by students and other research practioners.

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