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For more information:

uvic.ca/ocbr
tel: 250-472-4171
fax: 250-853-3547

Mailing Address:

Office of Community-Based Research
University of Victoria UH3
PO Box 3060 STN CSC
Victoria BC, V8W 3R4 CANADA
e: ocbr@uvic.ca



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This publication was made possible by a generous donation from the Vancouver Foundation.

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Community-Based Research (CBR) Matters for Faculty and Community:

Community-based research “is a collaborative approach to research that equitably involves all partners in the research process and recognizes the unique strengths that each brings. CBR begins with a research topic of importance to the community and has the aim of combining knowledge with action and achieving social change...” (Kellogg Health Scholars, 2011)

Community-based research offers a unique opportunity for democratizing knowledge creation, allowing community researchers to have an equal voice in all aspects of research. It is both a local and a global approach. With its origins in what many people term the majority world, CBR is used across the globe to empower communities one at a time, contributing to an overall shift in power and control over themselves and their communities.



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Why Community-Based Research Matters:

The following principles of CBR, adapted from the Centre for Community Based Research and Israel et al. (2003) provide a good set of guidelines.

Community

CBR's most basic premise is that the community is a unit of identity. This does not mean that communities are devoid of internal tensions, contradictions and hierarchies. Rather, it implies that membership in a community is a valued position that brings with it a better understanding of what a community needs.

The research is situated in the community

The research question arises out of community interests and concerns, rather than being imposed on the community by outside researchers, and is of direct relevance to the well-being of that community.

The goals are tangible, practical results

The orientation of CBR projects is based in social justice, with the underlying goals being the betterment of the community, however that is defined by that community. CBR projects integrate research and action for the benefit of all involved.

Builds on community strengths and resources

Everyone involved in a CBR project is seen to have something of value to contribute, underscoring the basic belief that the community has many strengths and resources that can, and should, be mobilized. This means that CBR projects are not about bringing in outside experts to tell the community what they should value, how they should do things, or that someone else needs to do it for them. While academics bring their own distinct and valuable skill sets and resources that can benefit communities, their knowledge is not privileged over that of community members who may not have academic credentials.

The research is collaborative

Community members are equal partners in the project: they are researchers, organizers and participants. They also have equal say in how the project should proceed, what the goals are, and how these goals will be attained. In other words, those who have a stake in the research, have power and control with regards to how it is completed.

Power is relational

Power is not only present in all relationships in some form or another, but it is also a relational concept. The goal of CBR is to equalize power relationships as best as possible, with those who have power and privilege taking proactive steps to use that power justly. At times, this means remaining silent or stepping back from situations in order to empower others.

There are many understandings and perspectives

CBR is premised on the notion that each person involved in the project not only has something unique to contribute, but also sees the situation in a different way which, together with other points of view, creates a richer and deeper understanding of the situation and possible approaches to solving it.

Cyclical, iterative processes

In order to facilitate collaborative research and learning, as well as an equalization of power, CBR employs a cyclical, iterative process whereby those involved in the project repeatedly renegotiate roles, goals and strategies as the project progresses in order to improve themselves and the project.

Self-reflection

Not only is the CBR process cyclical in terms of what the project entails, it also involves repeated self-reflection on the part of those involved. Researchers look to their own actions and understandings to see how things can be improved, analyze where they stand in relationships of power, and how those positions affect what they can and cannot do. Through this process, researchers have the opportunity to both grow and contribute further to their project.

Accessible findings

The outcome of CBR research is always intended to be of use to all partners involved in the project. This means that not only are the findings disseminated to all partners and by all partners, but they are made accessible and intelligible.



Dr. Lamine Kane, Uganda Multiversity Project, Dr. Rajesh Tandon (Society for Participatory Research in Asia, New Delhi) and Dr. Peter Keller (UVic Dean of Social Science) attending the Community University Exposition (CUExpo) hosted by UVic in 2008.

Examples:

Community-driven research in Seattle

Focuses on the Seattle Partners, a partnership of community agencies, activists, health care professionals and academics whose goal is to improve the health of Seattle. It includes a section on the legacy of CBR in Seattle, the research methodology and the research results.

Eisinger, A., & Senturia, K. (2001). Doing community-driven research: A description of Seattle Partners for Healthy Communities. *Journal of Urban Health*, 78 (3), 519-534.

Living Knowledge - International Science Shop Network

Science shops are organisations created as mediators between citizen groups and research institutions. Science shops are important actors in community-based research as they provide independent, participatory research support in response to concerns experienced by civil society. Science shops provide a unique antenna function for society's current and future demands on science. (The term 'science' is used in its broadest sense, incorporating social and human sciences, as well as natural, physical, engineering and technical sciences).

See: www.scienceshops.org/new%20web-content/framesets/fs-about.html

Elder Mistreatment in Chicago

For this project, researchers partnered with Chicago's Chinese community to explore issues surrounding the mistreatment of older adults. This article shows how such a partnership illuminates an issue that many people find difficult to talk about, for both personal and cultural reasons.

Dong, X., Chang, E-S., Wong, E., Wong, B., & Simon, M.A. (2011). How do U.S. Chinese older adults view elder mistreatment? Findings from a community-based participatory research study. *Journal of Aging and Health*, 23 (2), 289-312.

Skills Capacity and Community Researchers

The University of British Columbia (UBC) has addressed some of the potential problems faced by CBR researchers, namely ensuring that partners outside of academia have the necessary skills to be able to engage in community-based research. To this end, UBC has set up a training program geared towards students and community members, empowering them to conduct more effective CBR projects and partnerships.

Masuda, J.R., Creighton, G., Nixon, S., & Frankish, J. (2011). Building capacity for community-based participatory research for health disparities in Canada: The case of "Partnerships in Community Health Research." *Health Promotion Practice*, 12 (2), 280-292.