

Executive Summary - Guidelines for Peer Review of Community-based Research

The URBAN Publication Committee drafted these guidelines to help editors and reviewers identify high-quality community-based research for publication. The guidelines also may help researchers conduct high-quality studies. The full guidelines are posted at www.urbanresearchnetwork.org.

Definition – Community-based Research (CBR)

In broad terms, community-based research (CBR) includes community members at some level in directing, designing, implementing, analyzing, using and/or evaluating research aimed at empowering the community and facilitating social change.

Criteria for Evaluating Methodology

CBR submissions should meet prevailing standards of methodological rigor, such as careful research design, and, if applicable, reliable and valid data sources and coding. How rigor is attained, however, may differ from conventional approaches to research objectivity. In this way CBR highlights epistemological questions at the core of research. For instance, CBR researchers argue that analyzing data with community-based actors representing multiple perspectives and social locations can strengthen rather than weaken reliability and validity. To maintain rigor, CBR researchers (as do all social researchers) should:

- 1) Define terms (e.g., community, participation), and how they are operationalized.
- 2) Describe communities involved (e.g., geographic, socio-economic, ethnographic, etc.).
- 3) Spell out the nature and degree of community involvement in research process.
- 4) Explain why the selected community-based methods suit the study's aims.
- 5) Make explicit strategies and methods of data collection, organization, and analysis.
- 6) Triangulate methods to address characteristic strengths and weaknesses.
- 7) Address all relevant ethical issues such as data use, dissemination, protection of human subjects, etc.
- 8) Specify understandings outside traditional research arrangements (editorial control of presentation, data ownership, etc.).
- 9) Delineate limitations and advantages of the resulting study in design and execution.
- 10) Include community partners in evaluating research's relative and mutual benefits.

Criteria for Evaluating Theoretical Contributions

CBR may generate different forms of knowledge than conventional academic approaches. To evaluate theoretical contributions of CBR, reviewers should assess how researchers:

- (1) Integrate multiple forms and sources of knowledge, including a theoretical orientation that helps address the methodological challenges specific to a research project.
- (2) Enhance knowledge based on its application in practice;
- (3) Develop action-based theories with predictive power.

Criteria for Presenting Findings

Community-based researchers should:

- (1) Clarify collaborators' roles in conceptualizing, producing, and disseminating research.
- (2) Commit to producing knowledge in formats useful to all collaborators, including activists. This may entail preparing publications tailored to distinct audiences.

Peer-reviewed journals that regularly publish community-based research

- **Action Learning: Research & Practice** (Taylor and Francis) <http://www.tandfonline.com/action/journalInformation?show=aimsScope&journalCode=calr20#.U78AZKjux3A>
ALRP publishes articles that advance knowledge and assist the development of practice through the processes of action learning. Articles should aim to create theory, grounded in empirical observation of data and experience, that widens understanding of action learning and research in professional and organizational settings.
- **Action Research Journal** (Sage) <http://arj.sagepub.com>
Action Research is an international, interdisciplinary, peer-reviewed journal, which is a forum for the development of the theory and practice of action research. The journal aims to offer a viable alternative to dominant 'disinterested' models of social science, one that is relevant to people in the conduct of their lives, their organizations and their communities. The journal publishes quality articles on accounts of action research projects, explorations in the philosophy and methodology of action research, and considerations of the nature of quality in action research practice.
- **Community, Work, and Family** (Taylor and Francis) <http://www.tandfonline.com/toc/ccwf20/>
This peer-reviewed journal provides an interdisciplinary forum for social scientists and practitioners to share experiences and ideas and to debate current issues vis-à-vis the links between community, work and family. **Community, Work & Family** encourages theoretical, research-based, policy and practical contributions from academics and practitioners from around the world. It particularly seeks to highlight seldom heard voices, and encourage critical reflection, and to promote research with potential for action. It has published participatory action and community-based research.
- **Field Methods** (Sage) <http://fmx.sagepub.com/>
Field Methods (FMX) is the indispensable tool for scholars, students and professionals who do fieldwork. It offers important refereed articles, descriptions of methodological advances, advice regarding specific field techniques, help with both qualitative and quantitative methods ...tools needed by those who conduct fieldwork. It has published participatory action and community-based research.
- **Journal of Applied Behavioral Science** (Sage) <http://jab.sagepub.com/>
A peer-reviewed quarterly, *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science (JAB)* is the leading international journal on the effects of evolutionary and planned change. It publishes articles exploring group dynamics, organization development, and social change intended to serve both scholars and practitioners. Articles using participatory action research and/or community-based research appear with regularity.
- **Journal of Applied Social Science** (Sage) <http://jax.sagepub.com/>
An amalgamation of *The Journal of Applied Sociology* and *Sociological Practice: A Journal of Applied and Clinical Sociology*, the *Journal of Applied Social Science* publishes research articles, essays, research reports, teaching notes, and book reviews on topics of interest to the sociological practitioner. Specifically, we encourage submission of manuscripts that, in a concrete way, apply social science or critically reflect on the application of social science.
- **Journal of Community Practice** (Taylor and Francis) <http://www.tandfonline.com/action/journalInformation?journalCode=wcom20#.U8B9Rqh8F7p>
The peer-reviewed, interdisciplinary **Journal of Community Practice** contributes to the advancement of knowledge in numerous disciplines, including social work and the social sciences, urban planning, social and economic development, community organizing, policy analysis, urban and rural sociology, community health, public administration, and nonprofit management. It regularly publishes community-based and participatory action research.