



Principles and Practices of Community-based Research vs. Traditional Social Science Research

Traditional Academic Research	Research component	Community-based Research
Advance knowledge within a discipline	Primary goal of the research	Contribute to betterment of a particular community; social change; social justice
Extant theoretical or empirical work in a discipline	Source of the research question	Community-identified problem or need for information
Trained researcher, perhaps with the help of paid assistants	Who designs and conducts the research?	Trained researchers, students, community members in collaboration
Outside expert	Role of researcher	Collaborator, partner, and learner
Object to be studied (“community as laboratory”) or no role at all	Role of community	Collaborator, partner, learner
None, or as research assistants	Role of student	Collaborator, partner, and learner
Short-term; task-oriented; detached	Relationship between researcher and participant-respondent	Long-term, multi-faceted, connected
Acceptance by academic peers	Measure of value of research	Usefulness for community partners; contribution to social change
Conformity to standards of rigor, objectivity, research-control; preference for quantitative and positivistic approaches	Criteria for selecting data collection methods	Potential for drawing out useful information, sensitivity to experiential knowledge, conformity to standards of rigor, and accessibility; open to a variety and combination of approaches
Academic researcher	Beneficiaries of the research	Academic researcher, students, community
Academic researcher	Ownership of the data	Community and researchers
Written report	Mode of data presentation	Varies widely and may take multiple and creative forms: video; theater; written narrative
Presentation at academic conference; submission to journal	Means of dissemination	Any and all forms where results might have impact: public meetings; informal community settings; legislative bodies; etc.