

Community Authorship in Peer Reviewed Scientific Manuscripts to advance Equity and Credibility: 5-L Writing Benefit Model

5-L Writing Benefit Model

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In November 2023, during the American Public Health Association Annual Meeting, the Progress Community Health Partnerships Journal, in partnership with Morehouse School of Medicine, Community Based Organization Partners, Community Campus Partnerships for Health, National Health Council, Multicultural AIDS Coalition provided a community partner-focused writing and dissemination workshop. The workshop was designed to increase the capacity for community-academic partnerships to equitably integrate community authorship in scientific writing submissions for publication. The inclusion in the writing and dissemination phase of research, and more importantly, in the authorship of manuscripts are fundamental to the manifestation of the Continuum of Community Engaged Research (CCEnR) ¹ and Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR) principles.² In addition, it has multiple benefits that are discussed below. Dr. Kent Key, Associate Editor of PHCP and community engaged researcher facilitated conversations with community partners in Flint, MI and during subsequent meetings with the Morehouse School of Medicine's Community Engagement Course and Action Network (CECAN). It became evident, that the benefits for engaging in the writing process were not clear to community.

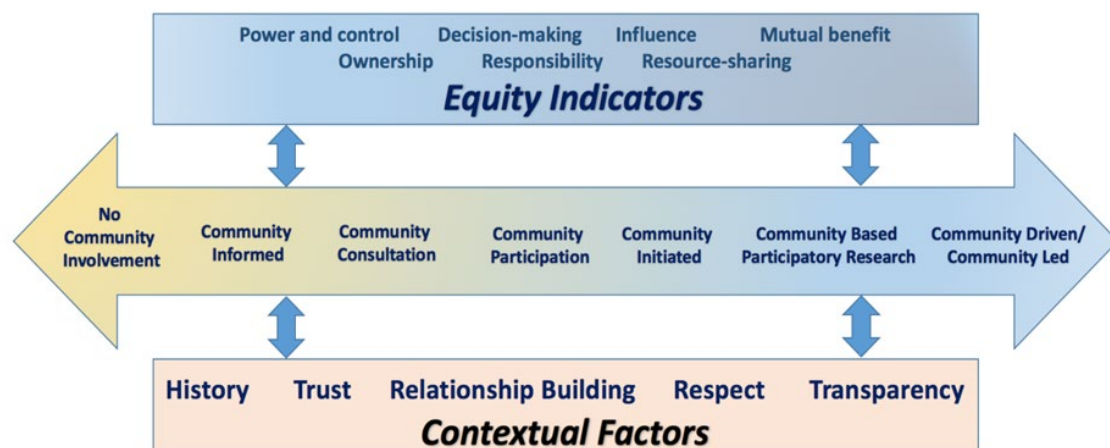


Figure 1. Continuum of Community Engaged Research¹

Principles of CBPR

1. Community as a unit of identity
2. Builds on community's strengths and resources
3. Collaborative partnerships in all research phases using an empowering and power sharing process
4. Promotes capacity building and co-learning
5. Integrates knowledge & action for mutual benefit
6. Attends to local relevance and ecologic perspectives
7. Cyclical and iterative process
8. Disseminates findings and knowledge
9. Commitment to sustainability

Figure 2: Principles of Community Based Participatory Research²

Historically, writing peer-reviewed publications in scientific journals has served as the currency of scientists and academics across all science disciplines to achieve promotion and tenure.³

Authorship had no merit for career advancement, promotion, or financial incentives for community partners. Even with the evolution of research to include new approaches such as CBPR, community members may not have seen the value of serving as co-authors in scientific manuscripts even if their wisdom and collaboration was central to research conceptualization, planning, implementation, and evaluation. In our continued efforts to advance the field of CEnR and promote equity throughout the research process, we believe that a new model depicting the community's benefit for engaging in the scientific writing and dissemination phases of research is warranted, and a nuanced understanding of those benefits is critical. The journal has shown its interest in establishing equity in the writing process and both socializing and normalizing

community authorship. Through this editorial, we hope to present a community benefit writing model that will facilitate interest, engagement, and utilization in community-academic partnerships to increase manuscript submissions that include community (co-)authorship. We aim to provide guidance for anchoring community benefit in authorship and advancing continued community involvement in research.

5-L CEnR Conceptual Model for Writing and Publishing

In non-participatory research, researchers and their teams lead manuscript generation and publication. In contrast, the continuum of CEnR and CBPR principles centers equitable community engagement in all phases of the research process, including writing and dissemination.^{1,2} Shared-decision making within community-academic partnerships should extend to writing and dissemination efforts. Decisions regarding what a partnership will write about, who will be included in the writing how ((co-)authorship and authorship order), which journal the writing/manuscript will be submitted for publication consideration, and other channels for dissemination (non-scientific print medium, conference presentations, and social media outlets) should include community partners and their interests/priorities given the diverse audiences that could benefit from said research. However, before this happens, there must be a vested interest from community partners in authorship and writing efforts.

To visually display benefit and provide context for community authorship, we present a CEnR Conceptual Model for Writing and Publishing.

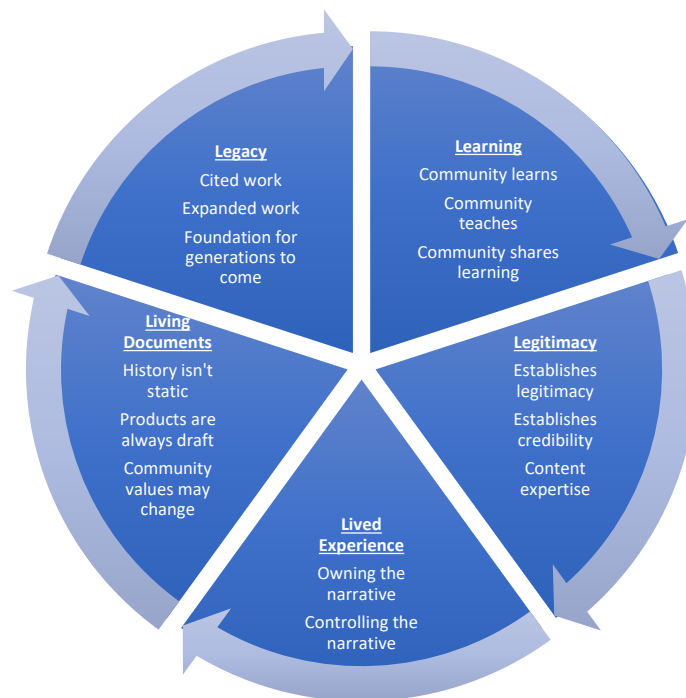


Figure 3: 5-L Model: Benefits for Community in CEnR Writing

The 5-L Model is designed to show the benefit for community authorship of scientific publications. Five benefit domains have been identified in the model: 1) Learning, 2) Legitimacy, 3) Lived Experience, 4) Living Documentation, and 5) Legacy. Each of these domains has unique authorship benefits for community members in research partnerships to consider.

Learning Domain: This domain emphasizes multidirectional- and omni-directional learning and mutual benefit. In research partnerships community learns about the fundamental and rudiments of scientific research design, data collection, and analysis. Community also provides learning opportunities to researchers regarding cultural humility, tailoring the research design to fit cultural norms and beliefs, and translating research findings into language and modalities that will be benefit community. Furthermore, community can disseminate the findings to the broader

community (ties) to scale up the impact of said research. As both recipients and brokers of learning engagements it is important for community perspectives to be captured in the writing and dissemination efforts of the partnership's approach and design.

Legitimacy Domain: In CEnR and CBPR, expertise should be mutually recognized and valued. Traditionally, researchers are the source of scientific expertise including specifically in the areas of research design, data analysis. However, community expertise is often needed in recruitment strategies, cultural appropriateness and competence, establishing community buy-in, and leveraging trust. Community authorship can underscore the community expertise utilized in research study, thus providing credibility to community authors as established experts in the field, possibly providing visibility and opportunities for community authors to serve as invited guests to conferences, symposiums, and other learning engagements as content experts alongside their academic/institutional partners. Researchers purporting the conduct of CEnR and CBPR also establish and maintain legitimacy through the regular practice of community co-authorship demonstrating that they practice the values of equity through the recognition and investment of time in this practice.

Lived Experience Domain: It is becoming increasingly clear that those with the closest proximity to a problem, issue, or disparity, would logically and theoretically have the most knowledge, understanding, and experience. In research studies across all disciplines that engage with community, lived experience is paramount to establishing context, cultural understanding and understanding historical impact and pathology. As community authors, community partners have the opportunities to provide culturally appropriate context steeped in historical context. In addition, it allows community to own and control their own narratives. This is important in that an outsider's interpretation and generalization about a community's circumstance may or may

not be accurate and has the possibility of damaging and further stigmatizing a community with inaccurate interpretations and misinformation. Thus, community authorship is a mechanism to safeguard and ensure the narrative is accurate and reflective of said community.

Living Documentation Domain: The adage, “if it isn’t written down, it did not happen,” still holds true today. Community authorship has the opportunity for factual record to include the contributions of community the research. It decreases the success of revisionists who may want to write community contributions out of the historic record. History isn’t static. Community values and priorities may change over time. Thus, it is important for an accurate record of key player and their contributions to correctly reflected and documented. As researchers (institutional and community) we continue to build upon and advance on the knowledge that has already been generated. Community authorship provides the opportunity for that to happen and ensures documentation in a way that gives community its just due credit in contributing to and advancing scientific fields alongside institutional researchers. Finally, understanding documentation as living recognizes that future contexts may lead to different interpretations, which asserts the importance of the intergenerational legacy of community contributions.

Legacy Domain: In the world of research, in academia and other research institutions, mentorship is central to ensure the next generation of researchers are prepared to carry the torch. Junior researchers are often mentored by senior researchers in scientific writing. This is paramount to ensure that the junior researcher builds the skill and capacity to establish their own path as an independent scientist. As a community authors, it is equally important to mentor other community partners to prepare them and build their capacity to partner in research with academic and other research institutions. An essential part of that preparation should be scientific writing and publishing. In doing this, a legacy is built and left for future generations to advance. This

creates a foundation rooted in science of cited work that demonstrates the value of community expertise and the power of community perspective a community voice. It also provides the foundation for subsequent generations (not yet born) to further advance and explore.

Conclusion:

Community authorship is essential to the pursuit of equitable partnership in research with community. Scientific journals should consider guidelines for community author submissions and provide capacity building opportunities for these potential submissions. Community partners must see the benefit and legacy that authorship in scientific journals provides. It may not ensure promotion within their organization, association, and grass root community, but sets that table to ensure that their experiences, words, and perspectives are equitably valued in away that ensures credibility and acknowledges them as experts in the field.

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