COMMUNITY ENGAGED RESEARCH
How IUPUI faculty engages the community in research activities

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Abstract: Academic researchers who conduct research with and in the community use different approaches that reflect the richness of epistemologies and disciplinary backgrounds that inform community scholarship. Although there is extensive literature explaining the principles and methods of "community-engaged research", there seem to be different understandings of how these principles translate into the research practice. This work describes how IUPUI faculty members that claimed in a survey to be community-engaged scholars involve the community in research activities. We analyzed the narratives of fifty-one tenured and tenure-track faculty members who were interviewed to explore their lived experiences in their work with communities on research or creative activity projects. Four predominant practices of engagement were identified in their narratives. These practices reflect differences in their research paradigm, the expected research outcomes, and their conceptualization of the participant community.

Conceptual Framework: One of the main characteristics of community engaged research is that it facilitates the active participation and inclusion of the community in all aspects of the research process (Israel, et al., 1998). However, in practice community participation may take different forms; from just acting as recipients of information about the results of research about their community, to becoming a partner sharing knowledge and decision-making power with the academic researcher during all stages of the investigation (Barnes & Schmitz, 2016; Cornwall, 2008).

The truth is that when conducting research in community settings, researchers face conflicting forces and power dynamics that shape their decisions about how and when the community will be involved. Usually, academic researchers play a major role in deciding what groups or members in the community will participate in research and what will be their role and gain in the process. Nevertheless, external factors like community readiness (Kelly, et al., 2003), funding criteria, time, resources, institutional support and the nature of the inquiry weight on the decisions that investigators make. In the same way, internal factors related to the researcher's academic background and previous research training contribute to these decisions. Internal drivers are especially important. Research shows that the tendency to scholarship of engagement depends more on the academic discipline than on the department where faculty members hold their professional appointment (Doberneck & Schweitzer, 2017; Doberneck, Glass, & Schweitzer, 2012; Lunsford, & Omae, 2011).

In this paper we inquire about the different ways IUPUI faculty engages the community in research activities and discuss some of the factors that may be contributing to different forms of engagement.

Data Sources: The research uses a sample of previously collected data from 76 surveyed IUPUI tenured and tenure-track faculty members (Norris, Wendling & Besing, 2018) with appointments in 15 different IUPUI schools[1]. Of these, five reported not involving the community in any stage of the research process, and 67 were interviewed to explore their lived experiences working with communities on research or creative activity projects. Our study includes 52 surveyed and interviewed faculty. The criteria for

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[1] By the time the data were collected, the School of Physical Education & Tourism Management had not been merged with the School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences to create the School of Health and Human Sciences.

selection of the sample was faculty that responded that they involved the community (Often or sometimes) at least in three stages of research: identifying relevant questions, creating consensus about findings and disseminating results

Method: We analyzed the survey results and interview narratives of a selected group of 52 researchers. We used frequency analysis and thematic analysis (Riessman, 2005) to unveil patterns of engagement with the community while conducting research.

Results: The results of a survey to 52 IUPUI tenured and tenure-track faculty show that, in average academic researchers conducting research in the community involve community partners with dissimilar intensity during the various stages of research. These results mirror the data obtained in the 2018 Faculty Survey conducted IUPUI Office of Institutional Research and Decision Support (IDRS) to a population of 1170 IUPUI faculty members.

Figure 1. In what stage of research is the community partner involved
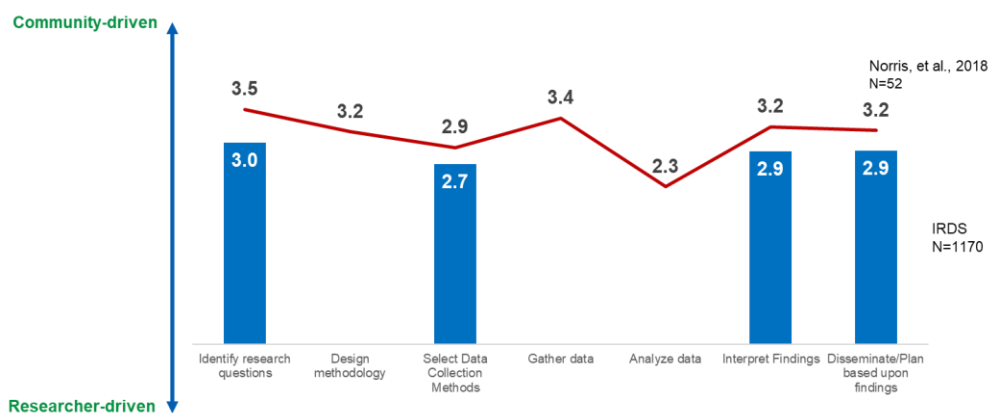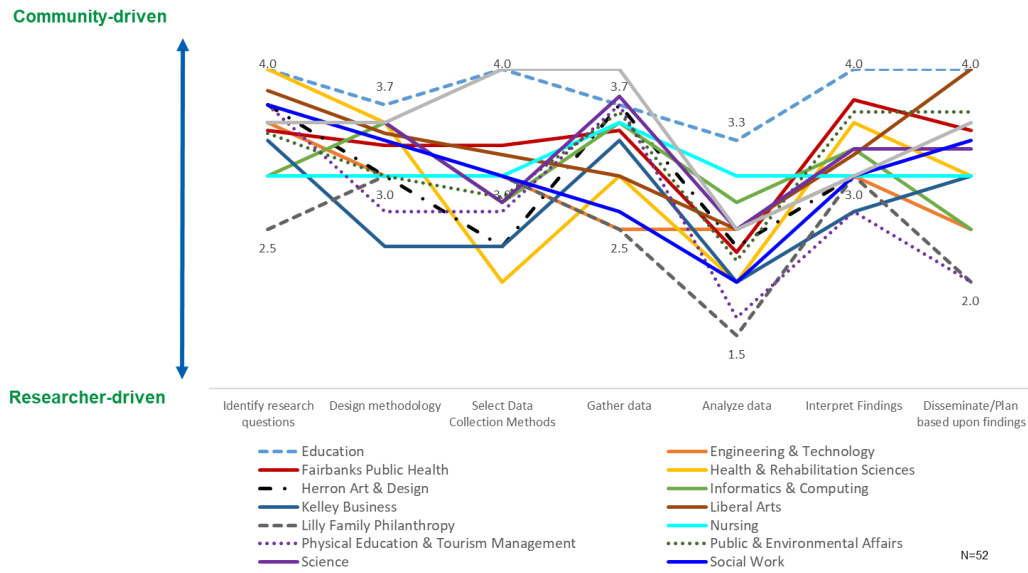

As observed in Figure 1 above, researchers tend to work more frequently with community members when they are identifying the research question. However, this stage of research may look different depending on the research approach and expected outcomes. For some researchers this stage may be focused on getting to know the community's needs and/or aligning his/her project with the needs of the community. For others, this stage is used to build and cultivate the relationships on which the next stages of research will be supported.

Figure 1 also shows that the involvement of the community tends to be high when data is being gathered. Usually, community members and community organizations are the best allies for data gathering due to their knowledge and ties in the community. Depending on the researcher's approach, the community may be brought into the planning of the data collection process and the administration of tools and techniques for gathering the data. It is also noticeable in Figure 1 that community involvement significantly declines when data are being analyzed but increases again (but not at the same initial levels) when data are being interpreted and results are disseminated.

A comparison between schools yielded different levels of community engagement (Figure 2). According to these results, respondents from the School of Education are the most highly engaged with the community in all stages of research. In all schools, data analysis is mostly under the control of the academic researcher, but data interpretation is a shared endeavor.
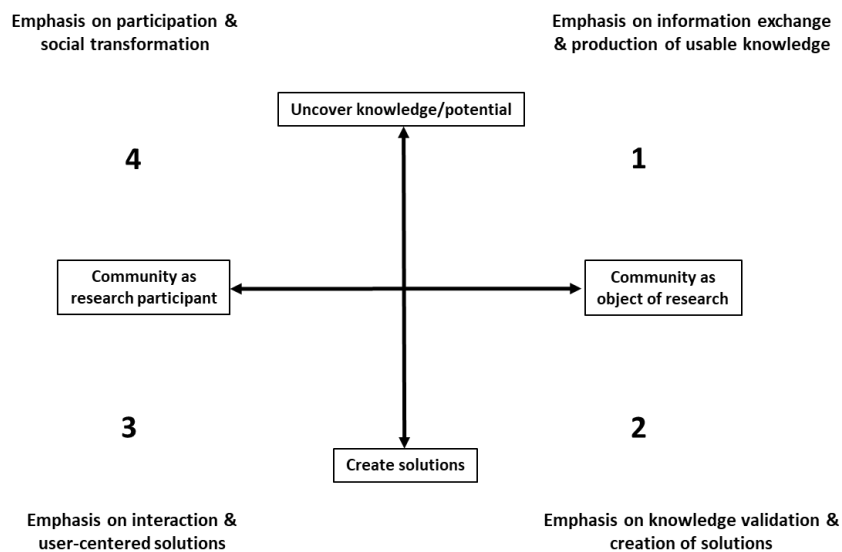
Figure 2. Where is engagement different? Part 1.

Community-driven

Researcher-driven

| | Identify research questions | Design methodology | Select Data Collection Methods | Gather data | Analyze data | Interpret Findings | Disseminate/Plan based upon findings |

Legend:
- Education (dashed)
- Engineering & Technology
- Fairbanks Public Health
- Health & Rehabilitation Sciences
- Herron Art & Design
- Informatics & Computing
- Kelley Business
- Liberal Arts
- Lilly Family Philanthropy
- Nursing
- Physical Education & Tourism Management
- Public & Environmental Affairs
- Science
- Social Work

N=52

One of the main differences found in community involvement is in the dissemination of results. This can be considered one of the most important stages of research since it may define audiences (to whom results are presented), and how results are used and appropriated by the community where research takes place. As shown in Figure 2, faculty members in certain schools keep greater control over the dissemination of results.

We tried to find patterns in the narratives that could be used to define ways in which faculty involves the community in research activities. We found that IUPUI researchers engage with the community in four different ways (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Predominant Narratives

Emphasis on participation & social transformation

Emphasis on information exchange & production of usable knowledge

Uncover knowledge/potential

4   **1**

Community as research participant

Community as object of research

3   **2**

Create solutions

Emphasis on interaction & user-centered solutions

Emphasis on knowledge validation & creation of solutions

The horizontal line represents a continuum in the nature of the relationship between the investigator and the investigated (Slevitch, 2011). On one end of the line, academic researchers position themselves as active participants with the community researchers with equal decision-making power and control on all research stages. Research is a process co-created by both academic and community researchers. On the other end, the researcher sees the community as the object of research and controls how the investigation develops. We found that near 70% in our sample sees the community as object of research.

The vertical line refers to the intentions of research in terms of how it benefits the community. In the upper end of the line, the main intention is to uncover knowledge or reveal the potential of those involved in university-community research collaborations. On the lower end of the line, the main intention is to solve an issue, or deliver a product or service to address specific community needs.

The intersection of these two lines creates four quadrants that help distinguish four predominant narratives. The first category of narratives (quadrant 1) emphasizes uncovering knowledge about the community and/or producing knowledge ready to use by the community. Some of this research tends to collect observational data and build theories. The researcher keeps control of research decisions and the interaction with the community is mainly to obtain information, knowledge or data to produce usable knowledge.

The second predominant narrative (quadrant 2) emphasizes the use of applied research and using the community to validate theoretical knowledge. There is also emphasis on producing services and/or products to address specific needs. The researcher keeps control of the research process and research tends to be transactional in nature.

The third predominant narrative (quadrant 3) is about producing solutions centered on the need of the community. Researchers involve the community in each phase of the research process to create highly usable and accessible knowledge. It implies high levels of interaction and the recognition of the value of the community in the co-creation of the final research product. This kind of research (or creative activity) is rooted in concrete problems or experiences seeking to provide products that can finally be appropriated (Carroll et al., 2001) by the community.

The fourth and last predominant narrative (quadrant 4) is about social change, community empowerment, social justice, power sharing and participation. Two of the research methods mentioned by interviewees were Participatory Action Research and Community Based Participatory Research. In this type of research, the researcher is a community participant, facilitator and learner, and the ultimate goal is social transformation.

Figure 4 in the next page shows how interviewees were positioned in the chart depending on the patterns observed in their narratives. The numbers in parenthesis shows the number of researchers per school. We observe a high dispersion of researchers from different school distributed in more than one quadrant. In other words, the positioning in the chart does not always depend on the schools where faculty members are appointed. Rather, it seems that other factors such as the researcher's academic profession, previous experiences and training are influential in the approach taken to engage the community. These results confirm previous findings about the role of academic discipline in the scholarship of engagement (Doberneck & Schweitzer, 2017; Doberneck, Glass, & Schweitzer, 2012; Lunsford, & Omae, 2011). However, the analysis also reveals predominance of researchers from certain schools in specific categories (i.e. higher proportion of researchers from the school of Public Health in the fourth quadrant). Meaning that we cannot deny the importance of the culture of the school and department in defining how community research is conducted.

Figure 4. Where is engagement different? Part 2.
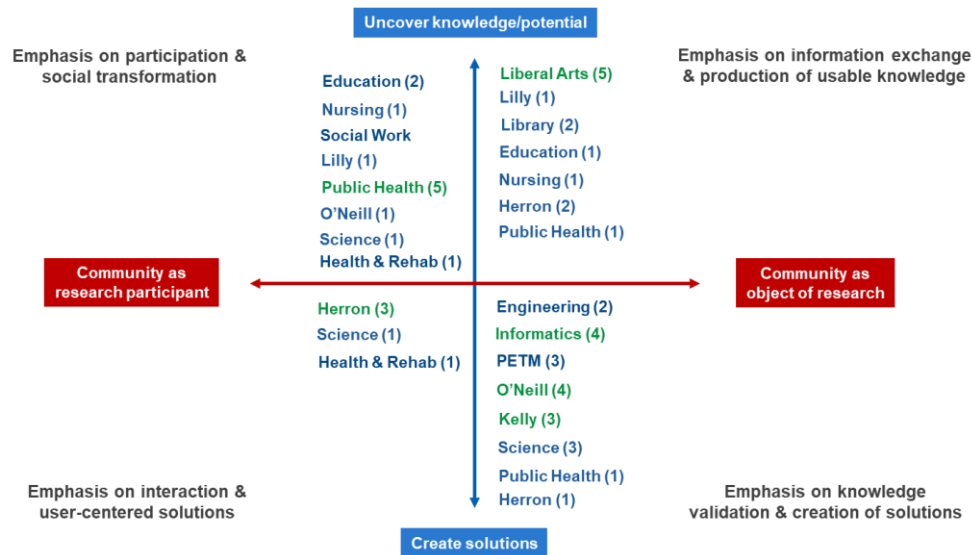
Conclusions: Although previous studies have analyzed how faculty engagement relates to other variables like discipline, gender, and appointment type (Lunsford & Omae, 2011; Doberneck & Schweitzer, 2011), the ways in which engagement is reflected in the research practice has been little explored. This research provides understanding on how differences in research paradigms, outcomes of research, and conceptualization of the participant community intersect to create distinctive approaches to community research. Next studies should focus on how internal factors (i.e. researcher's background and experiences) and external factors (i.e. department research culture, community readiness) contribute to shape the researcher's decisions to engage the community in research activities.

Key Words: Community-engaged research, engaged university, community engagement.

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