COMMUNITY BASED RESEARCH METHODS: AN INTRODUCTION

RONNIE MUNCK

HEAD OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

DUBLIN CITY UNIVERSITY

MY RESEARCH SITES

- Durban: women and work in townships

- Makerere: women, governance and water

- Liverpool: disadvantaged communities and regeneration

- Dublin: migrants and mental health, arts and regeneration

- Belfast: mental health and community care, work oral histories

- Vilcabamba: indigenous community development

WHAT IS COMMUNITY BASED RESEARCH?

— Community-based participatory research is research conducted by and for those most directly affected by the issue, condition, situation, or intervention being studied or evaluated.

— It yields better, and more nearly complete and accurate, information from the community.

— Involving the community in research makes a positive outcome that meets community needs more likely.

— Action research trains citizen researchers who can turn their skills to other problems as well.
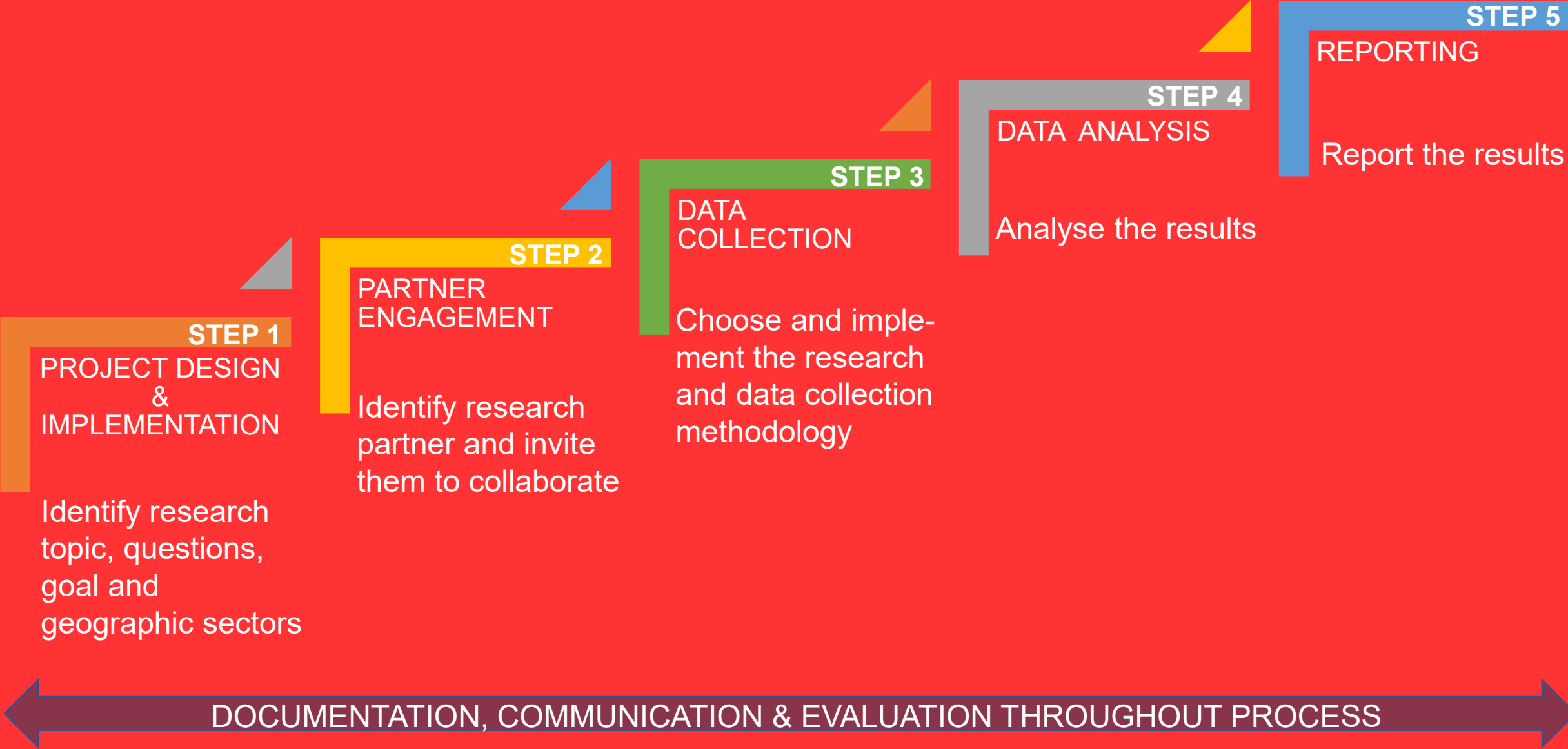
WHAT IS COMMUNITY BASED RESEARCH?

- Involvement changes people's perceptions of themselves and of what they can do.
- Skills learned in the course of action research carry over into other areas of researchers' lives.
- A participatory action research process can help to break down racial, ethnic, and class barriers.
- Action research helps people better understand the forces that influence their lives.
- Community based participatory action research can move communities toward positive social change

COMMUNITY BASED PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT PROCESS MODEL

STEP 5

REPORTING

Report the results

STEP 4

DATA ANALYSIS

Analyse the results

STEP 3

DATA COLLECTION

Choose and implement the research and data collection methodology

STEP 2

PARTNER ENGAGEMENT

Identify research partner and invite them to collaborate

STEP 1

PROJECT DESIGN & IMPLEMENTATION

Identify research topic, questions, goal and geographic sectors

DOCUMENTATION, COMMUNICATION & EVALUATION THROUGHOUT PROCESS

SETTING THE RESEARCH AGENDA

"No amount of technology can substitute for knowledge about a real person in an actual place"(John Mc Knight)

─ The role of theory and the role of practice

─ The pressures of funders and policy makers

─ Universities and communities: various relationships

─ Need to start with 'cognitive mapping' of the community site

SETTING THE RESEARCH AGENDA

─Community mapping is best characterized as a collaborative mapping exercise, in which local voices are articulated, as against standardized modes of mapping, which have historically reflected more top-down or expert forms of knowledge. As such it is in theory participatory, inclusive, and appropriate to local needs, interests, and goals. In theory as well it should be accountable and transparent, ethical, and sensitive to sociocultural, political, and economic contexts. *Frequently, of course, these laudable principles are not always realized.*

SETTING THE RESEARCH AGENDA

- A group mapping exercise is designed to answer specific research questions and gather neighbourhood-level primary data from community members (who live, work or attend school in the area), for the purpose of developing place-based planning, policy, and interventions.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

We can distinguish

— Exchange partnership; this partnership deals with formal arrangements for exchanging information, materials, staff, intellectual property etc.

— Service partnership; this type of partnership involve providing services to a partner institute but not as a market-based transaction,training, consultancy, capacity-building

— Research partnership; cooperative agreement for conducting joint research

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Different theoretical models of partnerships (e.g., community-based participatory research ; community-partnered participatory research).

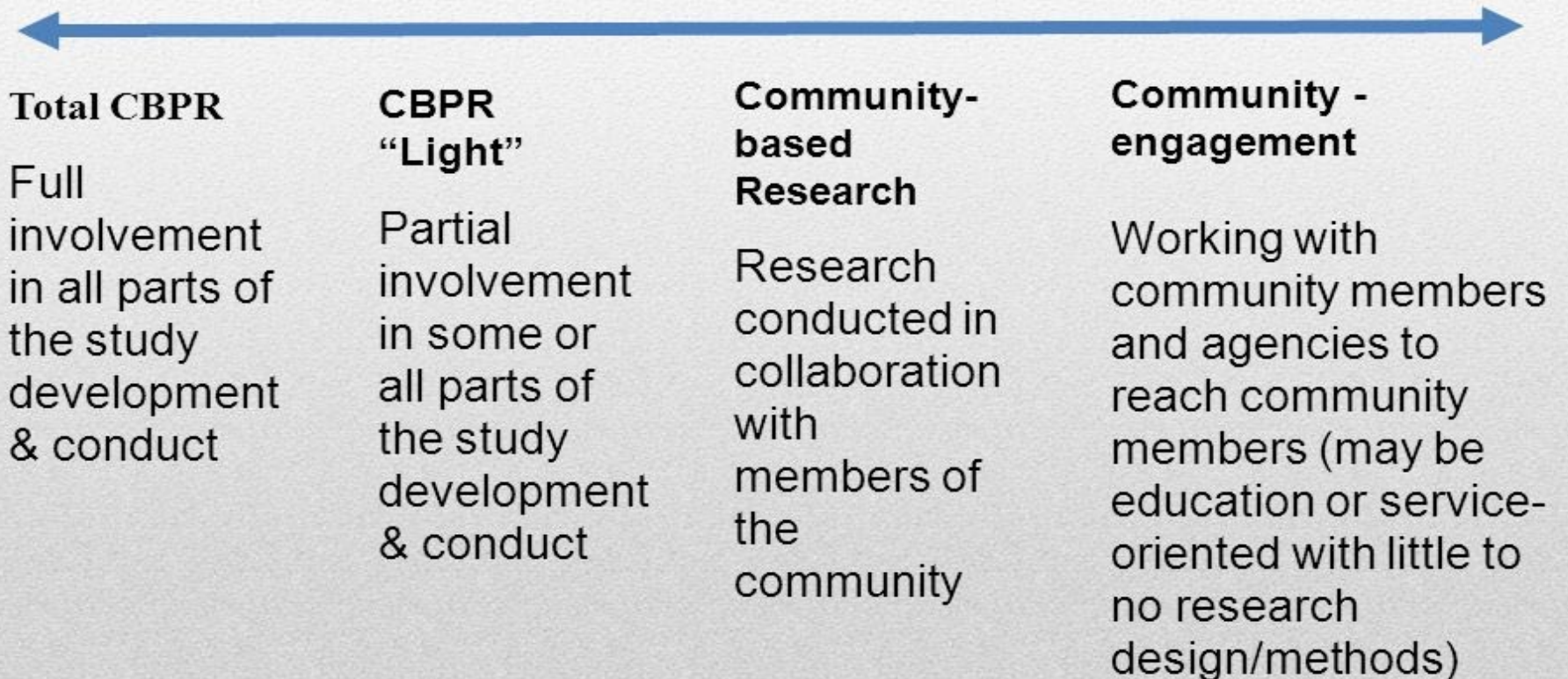To date, partnerships have been employed to:

— conduct practice-based research to characterize community-based mental health care,

— promote knowledge exchange between researchers,

— practitioners, and service organizations,

— conduct research that is relevant to practice, and

— improve the quality of community-based mental health care overall.

Continuum of Community Engagement

Continuum of Community Involvement & CBPR

Total CBPR	CBPR "Light"	Community-based Research	Community-engagement
Full involvement in all parts of the study development & conduct	Partial involvement in some or all parts of the study development & conduct	Research conducted in collaboration with members of the community	Working with community members and agencies to reach community members (may be education or service-oriented with little to no research design/methods)

RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY OF DATA

REALIABILITY AND VALIDITY and COMMUNITY BASED RESEARCH

— In simple terms, research reliability is the degree to which research method produces stable and consistent results. A specific measure is considered to be reliable if its application on the same object of measurement number of times produces the same results.

— Validity refers to internal validity – are you measuring what you think you are measuring?- and external validity – are your findings generalisable?

RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY OF DATA

ADVANTAGES of Community Based Research (CBR)

— Access to hidden data

— Vital 'insider' information

— Builds trust with research

— Fosters longer term buy in

RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY OF DATA

DISADVANTAGES of CBR

- Hard to find interviewers without own agenda

- Training of interviewers is resource intensive

- Danger of being seen to be on 'one side' of community

- Continuous work on reliability and validity

AUTHENTICITY

Authenticity involves shifting away from concerns about the reliability and validity of research to concerns about research that is worthwhile and thinking about its impact on members of the culture or community being researched.

Applies in:

— Research design: involve co researchers early

— Data collection and analysis: co-researchers are researchers and researched, ambiguous role, academic role?

— Dissemination: who is the audience? Policy makers, community, academic?

DATA ANALYSIS: SOME OPTIONS

THE LIMITS OF POSITIVISM

– POSITIVISM is the name for the scientific study of the social world. Its goal is to formulate abstract and universal laws on the operative dynamics of the social universe. A law is a statement about relationships among forces in the universe. In positivism, laws are to be tested against collected data systematically. In its essence, positivism is based on the idea that science is the only way to learn about the truth.

DATA ANALYSIS: SOME OPTIONS

─ VERSTEHEN (understanding) refers to understanding the meaning of action from the actor's point of view. It is entering into the shoes of the other, and adopting this research stance requires treating the actor as a subject, rather than an object of your observations. It also implies that unlike objects in the natural world human actors are not simply the product of the pulls and pushes of external forces. Individuals are seen to create the world by organizing their own understanding of it and giving it meaning.

DATA ANALYSIS: SOME OPTIONS

— PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH PRIORITISES LOCAL AND EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING (COMMUNITY KNOWLEDGE)

— COMPARE FEMINIST STANDPOINT THEORY

Standpoint feminism is a theory that feminist social science should be practiced from the standpoint of women or particular groups of women, as some scholars say that they are better equipped to understand some aspects of the world. A feminist or women's standpoint epistemology proposes to make women's experiences the point of departure, in addition to, and sometimes instead of, men's.

WHAT IS RESEARCH?

- INVESTIGATION:

  Not just information gathering, more detective than note taker

- WHAT IS RIGOUR?

  Be careful in gathering evidence, look for counter- examples

- CONCEPTUALISING AND RE CONCEPUTUALISING:

  Don't just fit to your categories, always rethinking the framework

WHAT IS RESEARCH?

- TWO WAY RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN IDEAS AND EVIDENCE:

  Back and forth between theory and reality

- INVESTIGATION IS ALWAYS UNEASY:

  You might not find what you want to, expect the unexpected

- NECESSARY TO 'STEP BACK':

  Don't get too immersed, get some distance now and then

DATA ANALYSIS AND COMMUNITY RESEARCH

Advantages

— Generates a collective product

— Engages participants encourages consensus?

— Combines academic and community

— Community participants knowledge can play to a certain role

— Builds ownership and legitimacy of research

Challenges

— Does not allow for complexity

— Not all in the community feel engaged

DATA ANALYSIS

— Analyse the data: role of social theory

— Manage missing data

— Develop analytical categories

— Interpret and share the findings

— An open approach to data analysis reduces researcher privileges and empowers lay audiences

— Which stakeholders can access, analyse and communicate findings

— How to encourage participation in data analysis and broaden inclusion of disadvantages in particular

DATA ANALYSIS AND MAPPING

— Participatory mapping is a data collection and analysis methodology. Participatory mapping falls within a broader framework of participatory research methods. Investigators using a participatory research approach engage community members in the collection and generation of information, using methods that place the locus control over data generation with the participants themselves. In participatory mapping, emphasis is placed on local knowledge and on building relations between community members and researchers. This method continues in the phase of data analysis.

DISSEMINATION or SHARING KNOWLEDGE

Impact is the benefit of research to society, outside of academia. Research contributes to the world in many ways - it improves our health and wellbeing, creates economic prosperity, enhances our cultural lives and improves environmental sustainability, to name just a few.

Public engagement describes the ways in which the activity and benefits of higher education and research can be shared with the public. Engagement is by definition a two-way process, involving interaction and listening, with the goal of generating mutual benefit. Engagement is by definition a two-way process, involving ongoing interaction between the university and the community

CHALLENGES: PROS AND CONS OF CBR

Pros

- Knowledge is empowering

- Research can lead to positive social change

- CBR can overcome a culture of silence around community issues

- Contextual knowledge derives from the experience, competencies and understandings of the community

- CBR may help bridge the gap between universities and communities

CHALLENGES: PROS AND CONS OF CBR

Cons

- Community research is process driven and producing results for funders is not so simple
- Communities are not homogeneous and respondents may reflect internal power groups
- Communities may re interpret a project and take ownership thus changing its purpose
- Building trust through CBR can just result in enhanced data extraction
- Seeking to deliver solutions through CBR can make research deficit oriented and episodic

COMMUNITY BASED RESEARCH METHODS: AN INTRODUCTION

RONNIE MUNCK

HEAD OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

DUBLIN CITY UNIVERSITY