



CONGRATULATIONS!!!



So you've decided to include a community participation component to your hazard or disaster research...

That's an excellent way to include more diverse experiences and worldviews, educate a wider range of people around your research objectives or results, and even collect data that may otherwise be unattainable to you as an academic. However, community engagement also comes with responsibility to get the project design process right and requires researchers to be critically analysing how they are engaging people in research (1)(2). Let's explore that design process...

1

MOTIVATION

There are many different motivations for why academics decide to include citizen participation in their work. These include gathering large or geographically spread out data sets, training people to help process large amounts of data, educating people about their area of research and how it connects to people's lives, or creating change in a community through science. It may even be all of the above. But there is likely to be one motive that is stronger than the others or started the thinking behind the project. What motivates you to include communities in your research? Be explicit about what this motivation is and keep it at the centre of your project design (3)(4).

2

DESIGNING THE PROJECT

There are some obvious design considerations to explore when planning this type of work. These design considerations include the scale and time frame of the project, the resources and funding available, the training or educational components required for people to understand and take part in the work, the technology used, and the type of research ethics needed (5)(6).

3

OUTPUTS AND OUTCOMES

You will have expectations of what type of data (quality and quantity) you would like from the project. You will also be considering who has access and ownership of that data, as well as publishing rights and how you are going to engage more of the general public on the findings. There are going to be separate outcomes from the project, including whether there is increasing levels of knowledge or sense of empowerment in some participants. You may even have more lofty goals of creating change through the science process; including activism and democratisation of science (7).

4

GOING BEYOND THE BASICS

Push yourself as a researcher to think passed these more traditional elements of community participation or engagement in the research design and be more critical in your approach. Three examples of critiques you could apply are outlined below.

Trust

In the age of 'alternative facts', there is a growing mistrust of science/research. How is your engagement work improving or worsening this situation? Is your project actively increasing trust in science, in researchers, in the process of engagement? (8)

Participation

Make sure you are considering how to create options to participate in the research that are inclusive and attract a diverse range of people. Are you aware of the societal structural barriers that make some groups less likely to join in the project? How are you actively creating appropriate spaces and making resources available to these groups as a priority? (9)

Types of Knowledge

Be critical of what types of knowledge is valued or counted by you in the project. Are you open to people's worldviews or experiences that are different from your own? Are you actively being inclusive of knowledge outside the western science paradigm? (10)(11)

IN CONCLUSION

Being critical of ourselves and our work as researchers allows us to attempt to not exacerbate historical and current inequities, including by continuing to marginalise structurally oppressed communities and groups, and by treating communities as a homogeneous. If these concepts are new, confusing or confronting to you, then that is okay! Everyone has to start somewhere. It your job as a researcher to...

BE YOUR OWN BEST CRITIC

Methods

The research in this poster is based on PhD findings. A thematic analysis on citizen science literature was conducted. The themes from the analysis were used to create a project development model for including community participation in hazard/climate change based research. For more information see McLaren et al (in progress)

References

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