Field safety in regard to diversity, equity and inclusion

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Many risks to assess when planning Arctic fieldwork

• Are the risks the same for everyone?
• Are the necessary measures the same for everyone?
• How does gender, ethnicity, age, health, disability etc influence risk?
• Is failure to consider such issues discrimination?

Broader definition of risk in relation to Arctic fieldwork

→ Includes personal safety
Being a woman is not a risk in itself...

...but being a woman in a world designed for men can put women at risk
Safety of women health care workers

Covid 19 infection rate among health personnel...
  ...in Spain:
  Women 75.5%
  Men 24.5%
  ...and Italy:
  Women 69%
  Men 31%

Source: UN
Poorly fitting PPE is a particular problem for women

‘standard’ PPE, especially safety harnesses, are not designed to accommodate breasts or hips.

A TUC* survey found:

More than half of women (57%) said that their PPE sometimes or significantly hampered their work – including 95% of women working in emergency services.

*Trades Union Congress, a federation of trade unions in England and Wales

Photo source: https://www.shponline.co.uk/ppe/tfl-launches-womens-safety-clothing-range/
It's not just PPE, and it's not just women

Personal safety

- Toilet facilities in remote locations
- Freedom for abuse, harassment and bullying

Safety of underrepresented groups

- Minority genders
- Ethnic and cultural background
- Sexual orientation
- Disability and chronic illness
- Intersectionality
Why do these issues persist?

1. Narrow set of identities in leadership roles
2. Leadership fails to consider identities and needs outside of their own experiences
3. The historically excluded experience discrimination, harassment or lack of ‘belonging’
4. The historically excluded preferentially leave the field

Greene et al, 2021 (https://doi.org/10.31223/X53P6H)
How can we change the focus towards inclusion for everyone?
Let’s talk about it!

For example toilet issues & menstruation

• Different ‘solutions’/ practices

• Rather little official information, very often based on ‘try & error’

→ Collection of best practice to learn from each others experiences

→ Include into field safety manuals
Why we should talk about it

- *It all comes down to awareness!*
- Need to ‘normalize’ these topics
- Get rid of ‘toxic’ shame and stigma
FIGURE 1. Interviews with twenty-six subjects covered fifty-four different field contexts. There were three rule states that emerged from interviews: rules absent or ambiguous (n = 34), rules present but unenforced (n = 5), and rules present and enforced (n = 13). [This figure appears in color in the online issue]
Why we should talk about it

• ‘Safe space’ starts at personal safety but affects other safety aspects

• If people of all genders do fieldwork, we need to make it safe for everybody

→ Responsibility of institutions & project leaders to create a safe environment

→ Work together to overcome the system?
So ... let's talk!

Thank you!